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LIFE BEYOND DEATH

SOME OF THE WORKS

BY .

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

ATTITUDE OF VEDANTA TOWARDS

RELIGION

SCIENCE OF PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

OUR RELATION TO THE ABSOLUTE

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

DIVINE HERITAGE OF MAN

SPIRITUAL UNFOLDMENT

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE

PHILOSOPHY OF PANCHADASI

DOCTRINE OF KARMA

Abhedananda Memorial Series No. 1

LIFE BEYOND DEATH

*A CRITICAL STUDY IN THE
SCIENCE OF SPIRITUALISM*

by

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA



CALCUTTA

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA MATH

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The second edition of *Life Beyond Death* is offered to the reading public with some corrections and new additions. All the footnotes in it have been added by the Publisher. Some of the plates of Ectoplasm and spirit materialised are also added to this new edition from B. V. Schrenck Notzing's *Phenomena of Materialization* and for it we are indebted to its Publisher. We are glad to see that the first edition of this book got a warm reception from all corners of the globe, and we hope that this present edition will also be appreciated by seekers of truth and knowledge.

PUBLISHER

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Calcutta—6

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Swami Abhedananda delivered from time to time a number of lectures on Spiritualism in response to the invitations from some well-known institutions of culture during his long stay in America. These lectures have now been published together in book form under the name of *Life Beyond Death* as the first contribution of the *Abhedananda Memorial Series* to the reading public. Three of these lectures, formerly published as separate pamphlets, have also been incorporated in this volume.

Unlike many of the books on Spiritualism the present work has a special feature of its own. Its pages do not narrate the legends and tales of ghosts and other supernatural beings as one in most cases finds in such books that claim to unveil the mystery of the world beyond the the grave. The treatment of the subject is purely a scientific one and it has taken a new departure from the prevailing methods and systems of presentation of this subject.

For some reasons or other a great majority amongst the learned people in modern times does not view Spiritualism with favour and appreciation. Their attitude towards Spiritualism is one of indifference. There are again others who are credulous and they without any question or investigation like to believe its everything to be true. The present work is fully free from both these prejudices and never subscribes to any of these blindly biased views. It has given an impartial or dispassionate view on Spiritualism showing wisely and ably its merits and demerits, its bright and dark sides as well. Spiritualism, in these lectures, has never been upheld, nor totally denied. One going through these lectures realizes to what extent Spiritualism should be accepted and to what extent it

ought to be rejected. Even those who are not in favour of Spiritualism or who delight to scoff at it will find in these lectures many things instructive and valuable.

Whether Spiritualism is really helpful or injurious to men as regards their religious perfection, whether there is any way other than Spiritualism, more certain, systematic and rational in order to reach the state of Self-realization should be known by every inquisitive mind. And these knotty problems have been clearly solved by the Philosopher-saint in these lectures with the remarkable characteristics of his own.

One thing should be made clear. The repetitions of a few instances have crept in some of these lectures. But their omission, in our humble opinion, will be of no avail, as the idea conveyed in these will lose much of its force and the addresses will appear somewhat mutilated.

Besides the lectures mentioned above, the Swami's view on the soul-life in the process of questions and answers, his discussions with eminent American scholars on soul's pre-existence, immortality, reincarnation and eternality have also been reprinted from some leading journals of America as to form the appendices of the book.

We are indebted to Dr. Amiya Chakravarty for rendering us his ungrudging help in revising some chapters of this book and furnishing us with many instructions, from time to time.

In addition to these the extracts from the Vedic passages, the utterances of some mystics, poets and philosophers and several notes have been annexed to it for the convenience of the readers.

PUBLISHER

LIFE BEYOND DEATH

CHAPTER ONE

MODERN SCIENCE AND HIGHER SPIRITUALISM

The Experimental Spiritualism—Sir William Crookes—Kate King—Mrs. Florence Cook—The scientific study of the phenomena of Spiritualism—Scientific thinkers—Maurice Maeterlinck—Prof. Myers—Dr. Hodgeson—Prof. William James—Mr. C. N. Jones—Sir Oliver Lodge—Alfred R. Wallace—Dr. Thomas Jay Hudson—Camille Flammarion—Prof. Hyslop of Columbia—Spiritism cannot explain any of our vital questions—True Spiritualism—Stainton Moses.

During the last sixty years Spiritualism has made considerable progress convincing many scientific minds who have been earnestly seeking for the truth of man's survival after death. The Experimental Spiritualism began in America in 1870. And in the following year Sir William Crookes, a scientist of great reputation and a man of extraordinary genius began his investigations with the aid of the medium Mrs. Florence Cook. It will be needless to go into the details of Sir W. Crookes' experiments which lasted for three years with that celebrated medium. During this period he took all precautions against all possible fraud or trickery imaginable and he employed scientific methods of observation and experiments with delicate instruments. The seances were held in his own house with honest friends who were equally eager to discover whether there was any truth in the spirit phenomena. Many Americans became familiar

with the name of Katie King the spirit-control of Mrs. Florence Cook. She materialized herself, her pulsations were recorded, her heart-beating was heard, she was photographed and she distributed locks of her materialized hair to those who were present there. We should remember that all these happened under strictly test conditions in his own rooms where electric wires with bells were fixed on the walls, so that the least little intrusion from outside could be instantly detected. Sir William Crookes was at first ridiculed by the scientific world but he had the courage of his convictions which led him to publish the reports of his experiments and he kept on experimenting ever since.

Sir W. Crookes was also aided by another celebrated medium Mr. D. D. Home who was more powerful than Mrs. Florence Cook in withstanding antagonistic influences and most of his seances were not in darkness but in bright light.

For the scientific study of the phenomena of Spiritualism, the Society for the Psychical Research was established in London in 1885 under the auspicious of eminent men of science in England. It is commonly known as *S. P. R.* The records of this Society have shown how marvellous were the scientific patience and conscientiousness of men like Edmund Gurney, Dr. F. W. H. Myers, Frank Podmore and their successors. Those who have read Myers' great

work entitled *Human Personality and Its Survival After Bodily Death*, will realize the truth of this statement.

Other scientific thinkers like Alfred Russell Wallace, Robert Dale Owen, Prof. Aksakof, Richard Hodgeson, William James of Harvard, and Sir Oliver Lodge, the principal of the University of Birmingham, England, have spared no pains to make correct investigations under test conditions regarding the truth of spirit manifestations. Well has it been said by Maurice Maeterlinck referring to their laborious task :

'Not an incident is admitted that is not supported by unimpeachable testimony, by definite written records, and convincing corroboration ; in a word, it is hardly possible to contest the essential veracity of the majority of them, unless we begin by making up our minds to deny any positive value to human evidence.'¹

We are all familiar with the fact that Prof. Myers who was the President of *S.P.R.* for many years, promised his friends that he would come back after his bodily death in a decisive manner. He kept his promise and a month after his death communicated with Sir Oliver Lodge through the noted medium Mrs. Thompson while she was entranced. Myers' identity was recognized by the first few words he spoke. It was really he and no one else. He said that it was very difficult for him to convey his ideas through mediums :

¹. *Our Eternity*, pp. 82-83.

'They were translating as a school boy does his first line of Virgil.' Referring to his present condition, Myers said that he groped his way as if through passages, before he knew he was dead. He thought he had lost his way in a strange town, and even when he saw people that he knew were dead, he thought they were only visions.²

Dr. Hodgeson who was the Secretary of the American branch of the *S.P.R.* of which William James of Harvard was Vice-president, promised to come back after his death and a week after his departure he came back and communicated by automatic writing through Mrs. Piper, and William James was present at these sittings.

William James of Harvard also in his turn promised to come back after his death; he kept his promise by communicating with Mr. C. N. Jones, the President of the American Institute of Scientific Research, and formerly Professor of Applied Mathematics in the University of Michigan. Mr. C. N. Jones gave the details of the communications in his article which was published in *New York Papers*.³ The first communication was received on the evening of Oct. 22nd, 1910. Five more communications followed one another and the last was on March 11th, 1911. In these Prof. James tried his best to establish his personal

¹. *Our Eternity*, p. 103

². *Times*, Dec. 10th, 1911.

identity and Mr. Jones and others who were present there were all satisfied. Among other things which are interesting Prof. James said :

'I am thankful that there are some who are perfectly willing that I should come to them. I mean that this kind man here, who is standing by my side, and who lets me use him—his body. He steps out and lets me use his body and I am thankful. I don't want to injure it or make it unfit for him in any way.'

It is said that Prof. James shook hands with his friends. Sir Oliver Lodge after making any scientific experiments with the help of Mrs. Piper and other mediums is now convinced that there is the survival of life after death. He said in his Presidential address before British Association, held in September, 1913 :

'I justice to myself and my co-workers I must risk annoying my present hearers not only by leaving on record our conviction that occurrences now regarded as occult can be examined and reduced to order by the methods of science carefully and persistently applied, but by going further and saying with the utmost brevity that already the facts so examined have convinced me, that memory and affection are not limited to that association with matter by which alone they can manifest themselves here and now, and that personality persists beyond bodily death. The evidence to my mind goes to prove that discarnate intelligence, under certain conditions, may interact with us, on the material side, thus indirectly coming within our scientific ken.'

The great English scientist Alfred R. Wallace said :

'No more evidence is needed to prove Spiritualism, for no accepted fact in science has a greater or strong array of proof in its behalf.'

Dr. Thomas Jay Hudson, author of the *Law of Psychic Phenomena*, said :

‘The man who denies Spiritualism today is not entitled to be called a skeptic, he is simply ignorant.’

Camille Flammarion, W. T. Stead, Prof. Hyslop and others have been equally convinced that discarnate spirits can communicate with us. Thus we see that such great men of science, as I have mentioned, have already accepted the truth upon which modern Spiritualism is founded.

Although many of the professional mediums have been pitifully exposed as frauds still there are genuine mediums and authentic spirit manifestations which cannot be explained by telepathy or by any other theory than that of the communication of discarnate spirits. On many occasions the audience is deceived by earth-bound spirits. The manifestations on the material plane, such as table turning, rapping knocks of the spirit, are ordinarily understood by Spiritualism, but all such phenomena belong to lower class of Spiritualism or Spiritism as it is called by many. Spiritism can only satisfy our curiosity and does not explain any of our vital questions. But true Spiritualism should be distinguished from that phase which is called Spiritism. Higher Spiritualism therefore is the name for that which starting from the belief in a life after death, reveals the nature of the soul and its relation

to God. This higher Spiritualism is at the root of all great religions of the world. Communications with so-called angels or messengers of God or *devas* or bright spirits as they are called in India, have been the source of knowledge and inspiration of the Prophets and Seers in the Old and New Testaments. From the time of Abraham, Jacob and Moses down to the time of Christ and his disciples all Prophets and Seers saw the spirits, heard them speak and followed their teachings. As in Christianity and Judaism so it is in the other religions of the world. As revelations came to the sincere and earnest souls of the past so they have come even in this age.

Those who have read the spirit-teachings which came through the mediumship of Stainton Moses will remember how higher spirits under the names of Doctor, Rector, Imperator revealed their messages to help mankind, to bring them out of dogmas, creeds and superstition of the existing churches.

Here we should remember that this Stainton Moses was an orthodox Anglican clergyman of England. He was dogmatic and creed-bound but still through him came messages which were not only astounding to him but to the Christian world at large.

CHAPTER TWO

DOES THE SOUL EXIST AFTER DEATH

What the atheistic and agnostic think—Chārvākas—Solomon in Old Testament—The dormant questions about our life and death—The modern scientists—Buchner the materialist—J. Luys—Percival Lowell—Herbert Spencer—Prof. W. K. Clifford—The Vedānta philosophers—John Stuart Mill—G. J. Romanes—Dr. Schiller—Kant—Hume—Those who depend on sense perception—The Yogis in India—The appearance of the 'double'—What science says—Prof. William James—The test of spiritualistic seances—The Hindus—The Vedānta philosophy—Christian missionaries—*Bhagavad Gītā*—Ralph Waldo Emerson—Personality—The world of the *Pitris*—Heaven and hell—The Persians—The Egyptians—The Chaldeans—The Christian idea—Prof. Huxley—The soul.

One of the most poetical of the *Upanishads*, I mean the *Katha*, which has been translated by Sir Edwin Arnold, under the title of *The Secret of Death*, begins with this inquiry :

"There is this doubt ; when a man dies, some say that he is gone for ever, that he does not exist, while others hold that he still lives ; which of these is true ?"⁴

Various answers have been given to this. Metaphysics, philosophy, science and religion have tried to solve this problem. At the same time, attempts have also been made to suppress this question and to prevent inquiry as to whether or not man exists after death. Hundreds of thinkers have brought forward all sorts of arguments to do away with questions bearing upon this momentous subject.

From ancient times there have been atheistic and agnostic thinkers in India who denied the existence of the soul after the death of the

4. "Yeyam prete vichikitsā manusye, astityeke nāyamastili chaika, etad vidyāmanushistastvayaham*."—*Katha Upanishad*, 1.20.

body. They are known as Chârvâkas. They believe that the body is the soul, and that the soul does not exist outside of the body, and that when the body dies, the soul is also dead and gone. They believe in nothing that cannot be perceived by the senses. Their motto is :

‘As long as you live, do not fail to enjoy. Live comfortably and enjoy the pleasure of life. Do not think of the future. Get all that you need and wish ; if you have not got money, then beg or borrow it, for when the body is burnt into ashes no one will have to be accountable for your deeds.’⁵

Such Chârvâkas we find in almost every country. For instance, in the Old Testament we read, Solomon says :

‘Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. * * * Live joyfully with the wife—whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.’—(*Eccl. i. 7, 9, 10*)

The followers of such thinkers are spreading very rapidly and their number is increasing every day. They are now known as atheists, agnostics, materialists, etc. According to this class of thinkers, those who believe in the existence of the soul as separate from the body, or in a life after death are ignorant and superstitious fools, while those who follow their ideas are clever and intelligent beings. Most of them hold that there is no such thing as

5. “*Na svargo nâpavargo vâ naivâtmâ paralaukikâha, yâvajjived sukham jivedârinam kritvâ ghrîtam pivet ; bhasmibhutasya dehasya punarâgamanam kutâha.*”—*Sarvadarsana-Samgraha.*

soul. No argument can convince them or change their views, because they will not admit the existence of anything which lies beyond the reach of their senses, or which cannot be perceived by the limited powers of the senses. They have written volumes after volumes against the existence of the soul, and have tried to stop such useless questions of the mind ; but in spite of their efforts, have they succeeded in stopping that innate question : 'What remains after death ?'—which rises spontaneously in almost every human heart ? No. The same question rises today as it arose thousands of years ago. No one can stop it, because it is inseparably connected with our nature.

The same question was asked by saints and sinners, by Prophets and priests, by kings and beggars amongst all nations, in all climes. We are discussing the same question today ; and it will be discussed in the future. We may forget it for the time being in the turmoil and struggles of our lives ; we may not ask it when we are deeply absorbed in comforts, luxuries and sense enjoyments ; we may delude ourselves by various false argumentations ; but the moment we encounter the sudden appearance of death, the moment we see that some one of our nearest and dearest is breathing his last, we stop for a while and ask within ourselves : What is this ? Where is he gone ? Does he still exist ? What has

has become of him ? That dormant question reappears in a new form and disturbs our peace of mind. Then we begin to inquire ; but at the very threshold of our inquiry we find an adamant wall which it is almost impossible to break through. Weak intellects stop there ; their feeble attempts to cross that wall produce no result. That wall is nothing but the belief that the body is the producer of the soul, that the soul is the result of the physical form we call the 'body'. Those who can overcome this strong barrier can understand whether or not the soul exists after death. The old, crude way of inferring the existence of soul after death and a future life for all men, women and children from the tradition of a single miraculous resurrection of a certain person, no longer appeals to our reason. The days of believing blindly in the authority of any one's saying are gone by. We are no longer children ; we want maturer reason ; we want to discuss that question more deeply. Those who believe in that miraculous resurrection, will perhaps say that those who do not believe in it, have no hope. But we no longer accept their statements. The time has come when we want to discuss the question scientifically, psychologically, philosophically, metaphysically, and in all other possible ways.

Now let us see whether the explanation that body is the cause of the soul is satisfactory

or not. Taking it for granted that the soul, or the mass of intelligence,⁶ or whatever you may call it, is the outcome of the combinations of matter which make up the body, we ask : What is the cause of that body ? What force combines the matter into the form of the body ? What force is there which forms your body in one way and my body in another ? What is the cause of those distinctions ? The materialistic Chârvâkas will answer that this body was caused by another body of the parents. As the parents produce this body so the body of the parents is the cause of this body.

But that is not the true answer, for instead of explaining the cause of this body and this combination of matter they show us another combination of matter, and the question remains the same. What is the cause of the combination of matter,—the parents' body ? They answer, another combination of matter,—and so on. Instead of answering the question and explaining the cause of the combination of matter they say that this combination is the result of another combination, which ultimately leads to the fallacy of *regressus ad infinitum*. The method of explaining the soul by the body is like the process of explaining the cause by the effect, which is putting the cart before the horse.

6. "Sa yathâ saindhavaghano' nântaro' vâhyâhâ kritsno rasaghana evam vâ are' yamatmantaro' vâhyâhâ kritsnaha prajñânaghana eva."—Brihadâraṇyaka Upanishad, 4.5.13

Modern physiologists, anatomists, pathologists, and a host of other materialistic and agnostic thinkers, however, hold that body, or the combination of matter, produces thought, intelligence, consciousness, mind or soul. They taught that thought, or intelligence, or consciousness, is nothing but a function of the brain. Moreover, they learn that every special form of thought is a result of the activity of a special portion of the brain. When we see things, or think of seen objects, the optical convolutions of our brain are active. A certain portion of the tympanal lobes are active when we hear, and so on.

Those of the modern scientists who advocate the production of thought by brain say that 'mind is conterminous with brain functions'. If the brain functions stop, the mind, intelligence, consciousness, and all the mental phenomena will instantly stop. The phenomena of consciousness correspond, element for element, to the operations of special parts of the brain. There is no such thing as soul; consequently there can be no question regarding its existence after death. They deny the existence of the soul altogether. The sensations decay when the organic conditions change and stop when the machinery stops. The brain brings into existence the material of consciousness of which our minds consist. Some explain the process of which thought is produced by the brain, by saying that the

peculiar structure of the brain is destined to produce thought and consciousness just as the stomach is destined to perform the function of digestion and the liver to secrete bile. As food materials, after falling into the stomach, change and assume new qualities, so the impressions of the brain through the nerves are metamorphosed into ideas, thought, emotion, will, expressions of the face, speech, disposition, etc. Thus thought or soul is the secretion of the brain ; when the brain is gone, soul cannot exist. Here impressions are compared to food as if the impressions were gross forms of matter or as if they could exist apart from a perceiving mind. Buchner, one of the most famous materialists, says :

‘Thinking must be regarded as a special mode of general natural motion.’

J. Luys says :

‘As one sees a metallic rod, placed in a glowing furnace, gradually heats itself and passes successively from the shades of bright red to dark red, to white and develops, as its temperature rises, heat and light,—so the living sensitive cells, in presence of the incitations that solicit them, exalt themselves progressively as to their most interior sensibility.

Percival Lowell says :

‘When we have, as we say, an idea, what happens inside of us is probably like this : the neural current of molecular change passes up the nerves and through the ganglia reaches at last the cortical cells * *. When it reaches the cortical cells it finds a set of molecules which are not so accustomed to this special change. The current encounters resistance, and in overcoming this resistance it causes the cells to glow. This white-heating of the cells we call consciousness. Consciousness, in short, is probably nerve-glow.’

Thus the Western materialists who believe that the physical forces are metamorphosed into ideas, thoughts and sensations describe the process by which this change takes place. Herbert Spencer, being an agnostic, advocates the metamorphosis of the physical forces into states of consciousness, but he does not describe the process. He leaves it as a mystery which it is impossible to fathom. That is, he does not know how this metamorphosis takes place, but he is sure it does take place. Spencer, however, identifies the soul with the brain and compares it to the piano. He says :

'Ideas are like the successive chords and cadences brought out, which successively die as the other ones are sounded, and it would be as proper to say that these passing chords and cadences thereafter exist in the piano as it is proper to say that passing ideas thereafter exist in the brain (soul).'

But here Spencer forgets that the piano needs a performer to produce musical sounds. Music is never brought out by the piano itself if it does not exist in the mind of the performer. So his analogy is imperfect and incomplete. It would have been complete if he supposed that the individual soul or mind is detached from the brain and plays upon its nervous centres and brain cells as a performer plays upon the keys of a piano.

Another materialistic thinker, Professor W. K. Clifford, who believes in the combination theory, says :

'Consciousness is a complex thing made up of elements, a stream of feelings. The action of the brain is also a complex thing made up of elements, a stream of nerve messages. For every feeling in consciousness there is at the same time a nerve message of the brain. Consciousness is not a simple thing, but complex ; it is the combination of feelings into a stream. Inexorable facts connect our consciousness with this body that we know ; and that not merely as a whole, but the parts of it are connected severally with parts of our brain action. If there is any similar connection with a spiritual body it only follows that the spiritual body must die at the same time with the natural one.'

Thus the materialistic thinkers, who do not believe in a soul as separate from the brain, or independent of the physical body, try to deduce mind and intelligence from matter, or from the combinations of matter, either by applying the theory of production, or the theory of combination.

In India similar theories were advanced by the Chârvâkas, who did not believe in the existence of a soul as separate from the the gross body.⁸ (*sthula shariram*). The Buddhists maintained that the body is the cause of mind and intelligence, that consciousness is the result of the combination of insentient matter and unintelligent forces of physical nature. They used the illustration of the inebriating power of liquor arising from a chemical combination of certain ingredients.

But Vedânta refutes both these materialistic theories by pointing out the fallacy of their principal arguments. Vedânta says that'

8. *Vide* notes.

matter or object is only one half of the universe, and the other half is mind, or subject, or soul. It is impossible to deduce the one from the other.⁹ In the first place if we analyze our knowledge of matter and force, we find that we cannot know matter by itself and we cannot know force by itself; that what we know, is nothing but a mental change. Knowledge of matter is nothing but the knowledge of that change of mind of which we are conscious. When we say that matter exists, we are conscious of a peculiar mental change beyond which we cannot know. The mind cannot go beyond itself. Even our knowledge that the soul or mind is a function of the brain presupposes the existence of another mind or knower. Whenever we say that consciousness or soul is the result of the combination of matter, that statement also requires another mind to be conscious of that idea. John Stuart Mill was right in saying that after dissecting a human brain, when one does not find there any trace of the soul or mind, and denies its existence, or asserts that mind or soul is the function of the brain, he forgets that such knowledge necessarily implies the existence of his mind or soul. As the knowledge of matter, or brain, or any other kind of knowledge depends upon the self-consciousness, it will be absurd to deny the priority of that

9. Cf. Swâmi Abhedânanda : *Self-Knowledge* ch., Spirit and Matter , pp. 17-18.

which is the basis of consciousness, of intelligence, and of all knowledge, and with the help of which one can know the existence of matter, or its combinations. G. J. Romanes says :

'We cannot think any of the facts of external nature without presupposing the existence of a mind which thinks them, and therefore, so far at least as we are concerned, mind is necessarily prior to everything else. It is for us the only mode of existence which is real in its own right, and to it, as to a standard, all other modes of existence which may be inferred must be referred. Therefore, if we say that mind is a function of motion, we are only saying, in somewhat confused terminology, that mind is a function of itself. Such, then, I take to be a general refutation of materialism.'¹⁰

If it be a scientific truth that motion produces nothing but motion, as it has been established by modern science, how can we maintain that the molecular motion of the brain cells produces consciousness, or intelligence, which is not the same as motion, but is a knower of motion? Therefore, Vedânta philosophy teaches that the source of consciousness cannot be found in matter, but stands independent of it. What we call matter is only the medium through which consciousness manifests itself.

Dr. Schiller, an eminent thinker of the West, holding similar opinions, says :

'Matter is not that which produces consciousness, but that which limits it, and confines its intensity within certain limits; material organization does not construct consciousness out of arrangement of atoms, but contracts its manifestation within the sphere which it permits.'

10. Romanes : *Mind and Motion and Monism*, p. 21.

There are other agnostic thinkers who say :

‘The conception of a soul as a substantive thing is a mere figment of imagination.’

Kant said :

‘There is no means whatever by which we can learn anything respecting the constitution of the soul so far as regards the possibility of its separate existence.’

David Hume, like some of the Buddhist philosophers in India, believed that the human soul is nothing but a bundle of impressions and ideas. Hume said :

‘When I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. When my perceptions are removed for any time, as by sound sleep, so long I am insensible of myself and may be truly said not to exist. And were all my perceptions removed by death and I could neither think, nor feel, nor see, nor love, nor hate, after the dissolution of my body, I should be entirely annihilated ; nor do I conceive what is further requisite to make me a perfect nonentity.’

So, according to Hume, our souls die every night when we sleep soundly. I think very of us will be ready to accept such an explanation of the nature of the human soul.

‘ Those who depend on sense perceptions only, try to see the soul by dissecting the brain, but when the senses do not reveal it, they deny its existence. They may just as well try to find the soul in the heart or stomach, as the ancient seekers of the soul did. If we examine properly, we shall be able to see logical fallacies and inconsistencies in all the

materialistic and agnostic arguments which support the theory that soul is the result of body or of the combination of matter, or else that the soul does not exist at all. From ancient times such materialistic conclusions have been repeatedly arrived at by thinkers of different countries. But do our minds remain satisfied with such ideas, and do we stop from asking again and again—is there any life after death? If we hear millions of times ‘there is no soul,’ still we cannot be entirely convinced that we shall cease to exist after death; we cannot think of our death of the body; we cannot think of our annihilation; we cannot believe that our individuality will be lost for ever. Such solutions do not appeal to our reason; they do not satisfy our minds, nor do they bring any consolation to our souls. These statements are but the expressions of ignorance of truth. Truth is that which exists eternally. If existence be a truth today, it must be true eternally.

If we deny the existence of a soul as independent of the body, we cannot explain many facts which often occur during our lifetime, nor the genuine phenomena described in the reports of the Psychical Research Society of Europe and America. We cannot ignore the facts recorded in the lives of many cultivated sceptics, of agnostics who have seen their *doubles* outside of themselves when alone in their rooms reposing on a couch or

an easy chair. There are instances of such *doubles* talking, walking or doing various other things. How are these facts to be explained? There are many descriptions of the manifestation of the *doubles* of the Yogis in India. Various attempts have been made to explain such events by asserting that they are either optical delusions or hallucinations of the brain. But we cannot say they are optical delusions or hallucinations if they can stand the test of verification. There are many properly verified instances of the appearance of the *double*. Suppose at night before retiring one is sitting alone in his room, after locking the door from inside. Suppose his mind is greatly disturbed with some important business question or a mathematical problem. He suddenly sees another exactly like himself sitting at his desk with a pen in his hand, writing something on a piece of paper; and, after examination, he finds that it is an answer to his question or the correct solution of the problem which has puzzled him for many days. What explanation will you offer? What kind of hallucination is this? What verification stronger and more satisfactory than this do you want to have? Such an occurrence cannot be explained by clairvoyance or telepathy. Some may say it is a false story, but mere assertion does not disprove the facts. The denial of a fact does not change the nature of the fact. Facts are facts whether we admit or deny them,

whether our current theory can explain them or not. Clairvoyance, telepathy, and thought transference have failed to explain these cases. Such facts can only be explained by the theory of the existence of the soul as separable from the body. According to science, that that theory is true which can explain most facts, and we should accept it until a better theory or a better explanation comes. Those who believe in the theory of production, or that of combination, will shut their eyes to such facts. But those who believe in the transmission theory, or, in other words, those who hold that brain if human body is the instrument through which the soul manifests its powers, will find no difficulty in explaining all the genuine phenomena connected with the *double*.

“The transmission theory also puts itself in touch with a whole class of experiences that are with difficulty explained by the production theory.”

Again, there are authentic instances of persons appearing to friends immediately after death.¹¹ There are many such instances in India, in Europe, and in every country. Such instances may occur where the persons appear-

11. “* it might be possible for this departing soul to manifest itself to its friends, either in the immediate vicinity, or, even at a distance, * * manifestations of the departing spirit, at the moment of death, are no means uncommon, but are, on the contrary, very numerous.”—Carrington & Meader: *Death Its Causes and Phenomena*, p. 382. Vide also C. Flammarion: *The Unknown*, pp. 108, 169-172. Cf. also the arguments put forward against the atheistic theory denying the existence of soul apart from the body and after death in the *Pali Pāyasa Suttanta*, *Digha Nikāya*, Vol. II.

ing to friends ask to have their children taken care of, or bring some message. One need not go to spiritualistic seances to experience these things. Many such experiences have come to persons in private life and in their own homes ; and they have been well verified.

In spiritualistic seances, ninety-nine cases out of one hundred of spirit-manifestations are mixed with fraud, and many professional mediums have been most pitifully exposed both here and abroad. The motive power in professional mediums is to make money, or to earn a living.

In India the Hindus do not trust in professional mediums. On the contrary, they say it is wicked to hold public seances for money. It is more wicked to earn a living at the expense of the poor spirits. Why do you try to earn your living by making the poor spirits appear to you ? Those persons who do this, are considered ordinary *fakirs*. Although many mediums have been exposed, and many spirit manifestations have been proved to be like magic or jugglery, still those fraudulent cases cannot be the reason for denying the existence of the soul as apart from the body or in a life after death. Now, the question may arise : If the soul exists after death, does it retain its individuality ? The Vedânta philosophy says, yes, it does. The souls of earthbound spirits retain their personality too. Some of the

Western writers, who have known very little of Hindu philosophy, say that the highest ideal of the Hindu religion is the annihilation of the soul. These childish statements prove their ignorance and prejudice. We hear such things from writers who consider themselves great scholars after reading the description of Hindu religion given by the Christian missionaries, who do not see good in any religion except their own, or who write simply to serve their own purposes. In the voluminous writings of the Hindus, however, you will never find a single sentence which teaches that the soul will be destroyed after death. On the contrary, you will read that the soul is eternal, immortal, deathless and birthless. In the *Bhagavad Gitâ* it is said :

'The soul of man is indestructible ; it cannot be pierced by the sword ; fire cannot burn it ; air cannot dry it ; water cannot moisten it.'¹²

'If the slayer thinks that he has slain, or if the slain thinks that he is slain, both of them know not that the soul can neither slay nor be slain.'¹³

Ralph Waldo Emerson, after reading the *Bhagavad Gitâ*, rendered this passage in verse in his poem entitled *Brahm* :

*If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep, and pass, and turn again.¹⁴*

12. "Nainam cchindiyanti shastrâni, nainam dahati pâvakaha ; na chainam kledayantiâpo, na shosayati mâruthaha. Accchedyo' yamadâhyo' yamakledgo' shosya eva cha."—*Bhagavad Gitâ*, Ch. II, 23-24.

13. Ya enam veti hantâram yaschainam manyate hatam, ubhau tau na vijânito nâyam hanti na hanyate."—*Bhagavad Gitâ*, Ch. II, 19.

14. Vide notes.

As regards the retaining of the individuality, Vedânta says that each soul after death takes with it all the experiences, impressions, and ideas which it gained on earth ; it takes its mind, its intelligence, its intellect and powers of the senses and enjoys, or reaps, the fruits of its own thoughts and deeds.

If you read the funeral service of the Hindus you will find that after the death of a person the relatives do good deeds in the name of the departed, believing that good thoughts, prayers and good works, done in their names, will help the departed spirits. The Hindus also believe that, if we think of them constantly and invoke them asking them to remain with us for our own gratification without thought of their good, we force them to remain confined to that particular personality which was connected with their earthly bodies they left behind them. Personality is always connected with the body.

At every birth of the body we have a certain personality according to the environments, and if we keep one soul confined in one personality or one set of environments, then there will be no progress of the soul on higher planes. Therefore, it is better not to drag our departed friends to our plane of existence, but to help them by sending good thoughts to them.

The most ancient writers of the Vedic ages show that they believed in the spirit

world of the *pitars*, or father, where the parted souls go after death. The king, or ruler, of this place is called *Yama*. He is the first of the mortals to enter that world and he is the ruler of that kingdom.

The Hindus believe in a heaven, but not in any real hell.¹⁵ The Hindu heaven is different from that of the Christian or of the Mohammedan. The Hindus believe that heaven is a realm where the departed souls go to reap the pleasant effects of their good and virtuous actions, that they remain there for some time—that is, until the results of their good works are completely reaped; then after that period, they will return to this world again.¹⁶ The Christians, Mohammedans, and Zoroastrians believe in a heaven of all kinds of sense enjoyments, where pleasures will come incessantly without troubles or any sort of pain. This, according to the Hindus, is not a desirable state. They say that all these celestial enjoyments are phenomenal and transitory. Supposing a spirit remains in heaven and enjoys for a million years or for one cycle; still, compared to eternity, this is very short time. So they say that, after enjoying the results of good works in those realms, one is bound to be born again, either here or in some other planet, according

15. But the *Purāṇas* or the epic literatures of the Hindus describe the horrors of hells for the men who are evil doers. The Buddhist literatures also admit the existence of different hells.

16. "*Te tam bhuktvā svargalokam viśhālam, kṣhine punye martyalokam viśhanti.*"—Bhagavad Gītā, Ch. IX, 21.

to one's tendencies and capacities. Therefore, in the *Bhagavad Gita* it is said :

'All the different worlds of spirits beginning with the highest heavens, are states from where one must return.'¹⁷

Because they are within the realm of the phenomena and are changeable. But he who attains to the realization of Truth transcends all phenomena and laws which govern them.

The Persians believed that the soul would rise three days after death and would go either to heaven or to hell, according to its thought, speech and works. This Persian idea of heaven was afterwards adopted by the Jews and the Christians. The ancient Hebrews did not trouble themselves about the life after death. They believed that God breathed life into man's nostrils and that the breath, which came from Jehovah, would go back to Him ; that the life-breath of all creatures would return to the source from whence it came. 'That which happens to man also happens to lower animals'. This life-breath was sometimes called *Nephesh*, *Ruach* or *Neshama*.

The Egyptians believed in a *double* which was like a shadow of the body, and which remained as long as the body remained. This gave rise to the idea of mummifying the bodies of the dead. If the body was injured in any part, the *double* or soul, was likewise injured ;

17. "Abrahmabhuvanâlokaâ punarâvartino'-rjuna, mâmu-petya tu Kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate."—Bhagavad Gitâ, Ch. VIII, 16.

so to keep the soul intact they preserved the bodies.

The Chaldeans believed in a *double* which would be annihilated if the body were destroyed. They expected a resurrection of the corpse.¹⁸ Many of the Christians have a similar belief. This idea gave rise to the custom of embalming and burying the dead. Some of the Christians still believe that the body will rise after death. Others do not believe in the resurrection of the body. They believe that the soul will remain and exist through all eternity, although it had a beginning. The Christian idea regarding the beginning of the soul is that at the time of birth, each soul is newly created by the almighty God. But the Hindus say that what has a beginning cannot live through all eternity; it must have an end. The Hindus do not believe that the soul is created by God or by a *deva* or by any other being. It is eternal by its nature. It is birthless and it cannot die. The Hindus do not mean destruction or annihilation by death;¹⁹ they mean by it a *change* of body or form. This kind of death is a constant attendant of life. Phenomenal life is impossible without death or change of forms. We are dying every day. Every seventh year the entire body has changed every particle and renewed every atom.

18. *Vide note.*

19. *Cf. Bhagavad Gītā, Ch. II, 20, and Katha Upanishad, 2.1.18.*

Prof. Huxley says :

'Physiology writes over the portals of life, *Debemur morti nos nostraque*, with a profounder meaning than the Roman poet ascribed to the melancholy line. And in whatever guise it takes refuge, whether fungus or oak, worm or man, the living protoplasm not only ultimately dies and is resolved into its mineral and lifeless constituents, but is always dying, and strange as the paradox may sound, could not live unless it died.'

Although every particle of the body changes, we still continue to exist ; our continuity is not broken. From babyhood to old age we retain the same sense of 'I' and of personal identity. This continuity of the conscious agent, or 'I', cannot be explained by any physical or chemical law. According to Vedânta philosophy, thought, or feeling, or intelligence can never be produced by any mechanical or molecular motion. 'Motion produces motion and nothing else,' says modern science. As such, how can the motion of the atoms of the body produce consciousness ? That must be due to some higher power, or force. This force is ordinarily called *soul*. The soul is not subject to the atomic or molecular changes in the body ; it is rather the cause of them. It is beyond all change, and consequently, beyond death. It is the basis of the continuity of the conscious state and of the sense of identity in the individual. As we survive and retain our individuality after each seven years of change and renewal, so we shall live as individual souls after the

final dissolution of the form of our bodies.
In the *Bhagavad Gita* it is said :

‘As during our lifetime we survive the death of the baby body, the young body, and the mature body, successively, and retain our individuality, so after the death of the old body we shall survive, live, retain our individuality and continue to exist through eternity.’²⁰

20. “*Dehino’ smin yathā dehe kaumāram yauvanam jarāḥ, tathā dehāntara-prāptiḥ punarjanma na vidyate.*”—*Bhagavad Gītā*, Ch. II, 13.

CHAPTER THREE

SCIENTIFIC VIEW OF DEATH.

The *Mahābhārata* on death—The mystery of death is not solved by mythology—Different scriptures—The Genesis—Adam and Satan—Scientific researches—Deaths of the conscious life and the cellular life—Prof. Charles Minot—Causes and signs of death—Trance, catalepsy and ecstasy—The old Babylonian method of embalming the body—The cremation method—The belief of the Egyptians—Mind as a factor in the case of death—Dr. John Hunter—Tourtelle, the French physician—Extreme anger generates poison—Grief produces a havoc—*Prāna* the life-force—Mind and the *Prāna*—Mind is the creator—Who is the conductor of the organs—*Ectoplasm*—Materializing mediums—Soul at the time of death—C. Flammarion—What is materialization—Subtle body—Body the instrument—Death is no longer mysterious—Nothing is destroyed—There is something unchangeable in the midst of changes.

In this age of commercialism and materialism few people think about death. They are rather afraid of it. They do not care to think what will happen after death either. They would rather live in this world, enjoy all the pleasures of life, make the best use of everything, and make a will, insure their life, or save a little money to pay the funeral expenses, and go on living. Out of the two thousand millions of people who inhabit this little planet, earth, forty millions of human bodies are disposed of every year, and a million tons of human flesh, bones and blood are thrown away as waste matter, as useless thing allowed to return to their elementary states. During the last war in Europe many millions of people were killed and were destroyed. Some of them were blown into atoms. But we do not

think of that horrible scene. We have almost forgotten it, and we do not think for a moment that we shall die. We go on living and doing the same things as we did before. Our interest is not is solving the problem of death, although it is the greatest mystery in the world. It is as mysterious as the coming of life on this it.? But still we do not think much about it. Even the Christian churches do not take such a lively interest in this problem of death today, as they did in the last century. They would rather busy themselves with questions—social, educational, and especially political problems of the day. The medicine-men of this age do not solve the problem of death, although hundreds are dying in their hands every year. They gather all the things that they can, and their ideal is to enjoy the pleasures of life, to make the best of their opportunity.

In the *Mahabharata*, the most ancient epic of the Hindus, we read a prize question that was asked to different great men of ancient times: 'What is the most wonderful thing in the world?' Various answers were given, but they were not satisfactory. The answer which Yudhishishta gave was accepted, and his answer was this:

'Every day, and day after day, animals and human beings are passing out of life, but we do not think of death; we think that we shall never die. What can be more wonderful than this?'²¹

21. "*Ahanyāhani bhūtāni gacchanti yamamandiram, shesdathiratvamicchanti kimśhcharyamataparam.*"—Mahābhārata.

This answer was given nearly thirty-five centuries ago, but the same truth prevails today. We do not think of death, although we see every day dead bodies carried to the grave right under our eyes.

The mystery of death is not solved by mythology or mythological beliefs of ancient peoples which have been handed down to us through generations. The scriptures of the Jews, the Christians, the Parsees, and the Mohammedans do not explain what death is. But in some of these scriptures, we find that God commanded the first man to do certain things, not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge ; but when the first man did eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the Lord cursed him and His curse brought death in this world. We read in the Genesis, the Lord commanded :

‘Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it : for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.’²²

Of course, Adam did not die in the day when he was tempted and when he ate the fruit thereof, but he reaped the consequences afterwards and died later. This passage shows that at first God did not intend that man should die, but the death came to the world through the evil influence of Satan, the devil. It was Satan who brought death into this

22. Chapter II, verses 16 and 17.

world. In fact, the curse was the cause, but the curse was brought about by the evil influence of the devil. Those who believe in this, that death was caused or brought about by Satan, do not care to think further about it. They leave this question as settled and naturally they do other things and do not try to solve the problem. They think that, if it be the curse of God, it is an inevitable end of life, let us be satisfied with it.

Scientific researches, however, toward tracing the causes of death have brought out many truths and many laws which were unknown to the writers of the Genesis and other scriptures of different nations. The orthodox science, or the materialistic science, as it is known to us, which denies the existence of the soul as an entity, and also denies the existence of mind, or life, or intelligence, as distinct from the results of matter and material particles governed by physical forces and chemical actions, says that death is nothing but the cessation of life, an inevitable end which all beings come to. The scientists do not explain it elaborately because they do not know much about it. Still they try to explain that when the vital parts of the body wear out in this machine, naturally the whole of the machine must stop. The vital parts are regarded as the heart, the lungs and the brain. When any of these vital centres is worn out, or injured by disease or accident,

naturally the whole machinery of the body stops.

But here a question may arise : 'Does the death of the conscious life imply the death of the life of the organs ?' That is a very difficult question to answer. Or, in other words, when a person is dead, does it mean that the organs are dead also ? On the contrary, science tells us that the organs do not die immediately after the death of the body or the conscious life. For instance, if a chicken's head be cut off and its heart taken out and watched, it will continue to live for a long time after the death of the chicken. In fact, in the Rockefeller Institute, there is a heart of a chicken that has been kept for eight years, and it is still going, doing normal action. That shows that the organs have their independent life which may continue to live even after the conscious life if the individual is dead. In the same manner, it can be shown that the cells and tissues have their own life. They do not die, but they live for a long time after the death of the conscious life. Modern science tells us that there are two kinds of death : One is the death of the conscious life ; the other is the death of the organic and the cellular life, which is called the somatic life. One does not depend upon the other. In fact, the life continues to exist, depending upon the natural process of the vital force which is known as the life

force. But this materialistic science does not explain how it is that the organs, the cells and the tissues continue to live ; because it denies the existence of a vital energy or vital force as distinct from all other known forces nature. On the other hand, it considers that this vital force is a result of the chemical actions of the atoms and molecules of the organism, and therefore, it cannot explain any further.

Professor Charles Minot of Harvard Medical School writes in his book entitled : *Old Age, Growth and Death* :

'Differentiation leads, as its inevitable conclusion, to death. Death is the price we are compelled to pay for our organization, for the differentiation which exists in us. Death of the whole comes, as we now know, whenever some essential part of the body gives way. Sometimes one, sometimes another, perhaps the brain, perhaps the heart, perhaps one of the other internal organs, may be the first in which the change of cytomorphosis goes so far that it can no longer perform its share of work, and failing, brings about the failure of the whole.'

This is the scientific view of death. It leaves death with all its mystery, with all its sacredness. We are not in the least able, at the present time, to say what life is ; still less, perhaps, what death is.

Thus by studying the materialistic science, we do not gain a very clear idea of what death really means. But science goes on trying to trace the causes of death, and describes the signs of death. Science tells us that the actual

signs of death are very difficult to find. The so-called popular signs of death, like the stoppage of the heart-beat, stoppage of the pulse or respiration, are not the actual signs of death, because there have been hundreds of cases where the heart-beat stopped and the respiration stopped, and yet after some time they were revived. The heart-beat might stop many hours, even for days and then it can be revived. Respiration might stop for a long time ; in fact, science has recorded many cases of suspended animation, where the respiration of the heart-beat stopped for forty-eight hours in the least. But there have been other cases where men have been buried alive in a hermetically sealed box for forty days, and afterwards they were taken out and revived. They lived, they married, and enjoyed all the blessings of life afterwards. It is very difficult to say which would be the proper or the final sign of death. Science tells us that the decomposition and putrefaction are the only final signs of death, and nothing else. And that shows that people might be buried prematurely. There have been many cases of premature burial recorded in the medical journals of the world every year. And for that reason, some of the countries in Europe have passed a law that no one should be buried immediately after death, until decomposition sets in. Because it is a very serious thing to bury living beings. There have been cases

of many prematurely killed by putting them into the coffin and burying it under the ground.

As premature burial is objectionable, so premature embalming is objectionable. Embalmers have killed many before they really died. They might have been revived and might have lived for a long time. Because it is a proved fact today, that when the person is considered as dead, he might be in a trance, in a state of catalepsy or in a state of ecstasy.

Trance, catalepsy and ecstasy are conditions which resemble death. The outward signs are similar. But what happens to the soul? Science does not know, because it denies the existence of a soul. A person might go into a state of trance and remain in that state for hours. There are persons who can stop the heart-beat by their will-power. I know a Hindu Yogi who came to America a few years ago, and who, in New York, went through all the medical tests to prove that he could stop his heart-beat at his will. The medical practitioners were all dumbfounded, and questioned how he could do it. It is possible, because it obeys the will of the individual. The individual will commands and directs the organic functions. But materialistic science cannot explain this, how it is possible, through the known laws that are accepted by these scientific thinkers.

The old Babylonian method of embalming

the body²³ and burying the dead, which has been handed down to us from pre-Christian era, and which is practised today in all the civilized countries, is based upon the superstitious belief that the body will eventually rise and go to heaven. But after the decomposition sets in, and the body is gone, what will rise? Science shows that *it is an absolute impossibility for the body to rise or go to heaven*. Still some people cling to that old belief, and think that their friends and relatives will eventually arise and go to heaven with their physical bodies. But the best method of disposing of the dead body is the method of cremation, because it is sanitary. I mean, it is the best method from the standpoint of health as well as from the standpoint of safety for the living beings. Why should we have so many dead bodies going through the process of decomposition around us? It is better to get rid of them and let them go to their elementary conditions. This cremation has been practised in India from very ancient times. In fact, in the Vedas we find that cremation was regarded as the best method.²⁴ But among other nations, burial or mummification was regarded as the best method. As I have already said, their idea was to keep the body intact for a long time because the soul will eventually come back to the body.

23. *Vide Notes.*

24. *Vide Notes*

The Egyptians also had that kind of belief. They believed that if the physical body were kept intact and not mutilated, then the soul would eventually come back to dwell in that body; whereas if any part of the physical body was mutilated, that part of the *double* or soul, would also be mutilated. They believed in a *double*,—a *double* exactly of the same shape and same form as the physical body. In India we find that the Hindus have a belief in the existence of a *double*, but it was not dependent upon the gross physical body. They have a philosophy altogether different from that of the Egyptians and other nations of ancient times. They believe that this *double* might leave the body and continue to live even when this gross physical body is destroyed through the process of cremation which they even now regard as the most sanitary method of disposing of the dead body.

Then there is another class of scientific thinkers who are a little more advanced than the orthodox scientists. They hold that mind is a factor in the cases of disease and death. They do not deny the existence of mind or intelligence or consciousness, nor do they believe that the mind, intelligence and consciousness are the results of the chemical actions of the atoms and molecules of the organism. On the contrary, they hold the belief that the source of consciousness and mind are indestructible. So is also life. Life is indestruc-

tible. They regard that life-force (*Prana*) is not the result of chemical actions. It is not the same as electricity or any other force that is known to the orthodox science, but it is distinct and separate. They give the cases where mind can bring death through extreme emotions. Some of the functions of the mind, which we call passions, will create disease and death.

Dr. John Hunter, a noted psychologist was a genius of extraordinary nature. He was a scientist, but he believed in the power of the mind, and yet he had very little control over his passions. He could not control anger. Once he had extreme anger as the result of a slight provocation, and through the extreme anger, he instantly fell dead. There is a historical record that anger kills the person instantly. The French physician, Tourtelle, witnessed two women who died of extreme anger. Extreme anger will produce the stoppage of the heart-action and poison the whole system. As extreme anger will kill persons, a slight expression of anger, anger of a milder form, will bring diseases of the worst kind. In fact, when a mother nurses the baby while she is in that state of anger, she feeds the baby with poison, and that poison works and create all kinds of trouble in the baby's system. It is a scientific fact today.

As anger is dangerous and is a destructive force which creates a havoc in the system,

so is fear. Now, the ordinary expression that we are frightened to death has some meaning. Extreme fear will bring death, will stop the heart-action, and the lungs also will stop, and simultaneously other organs too. Then there are other passions, hatred and grief. Grief will produce a havoc in the system. These are all recorded facts. When there have been cases of disease and death through extreme hatred and grief, how can we deny the power of the mind? If mind and different mental states can produce such effects upon the physical body and bring premature death, how can we deny the existence of mind as the most powerful thing that we possess? Therefore, these scientists, who are advanced thinkers and not bigoted like the orthodox materialists, regard mind as the most wonderful force that is working through this physical body.

There are cases of counterfeits of death, even in the lower animals. There are some of the insects which would feign death. The fox, when it is pursued by an enemy and when he does not know how to escape, lies flat on the ground and feigns dead, and remains in that state for some time. There are other animals which would even become stiff and the *rigor mortis* of death will be perceptible in the physical body of the animal. It can be produced by the mind. And this counterfeit of death may be caused by different things,

such as intoxication, apoplexy, heart-trouble and so on. Thus it shows that mind can produce these things under those conditions—the signs of death—and therefore these advanced thinkers and scientists consider that death can be brought about by the power of the mind. And they regard that this ordinary state which we call 'death' is caused by that self-conscious, living force, which is working through the organs ; when that self-conscious, living force is detached, it produces death. In fact, the self-conscious, living soul has vital energy or life-force (*Prana*) and mind with it. Mind is inseparable from the life-force or vital energy. But the mind cannot work unless it has an instrument. Therefore, it manufactures the instrument of the physical body. It draws from the surrounding environments atoms, molecules or particles of matter and charges them with the life-force or the vibrations of *Prana* ; and when the vibrations of life-force are weak, and are not up to the standard of the conditions of life, the living soul, or the self-conscious mind tries to raise those vibrations of the cellular structure up to the standard by making all efforts, and if it fails to raise the standard of vibration of the cells and tissues, then there is the death of the whole. The whole machinery dies.

Thus we see that there are two principal factors in the body, the one is mind and the

other is the vibration of *Prana* or the vibratory state of cells and tissues of the body ; but the vibratory state of the cells and tissues is governed by the mind. Mind is the creator. It is the manipulator. It is the organizer. It is the director of all the organic functions. The organs might go on vibrating in their own way, but that would not be the standard of life. There must be co-ordination. The heart-action must correspond in a certain way with the action of the lungs, and all this intricate mechanism must be all adjusted in such a way that one helps the other. Otherwise, there would be no life. If one screw is loose anywhere, that screw must be tightened ; otherwise the machine would not work. And who tightens this crew ? It is the individual self-conscious life-force, which is called, in ordinary terms, the living soul. Living soul means the self-conscious individualized life-force with the sense of 'I' ; and that sense of 'I' holds them together ; I am this body, I am Mr. So-and-so. This sense of 'I' holds all together, unifies them, and makes the separate parts vibrate and produce a perfect harmony, and that harmony is life. As in an orchestra there might be a hundred instruments, and if each instrument goes on playing in its own way without following the direction of its conductor, it will produce no harmony but discord ; similarly, if the organs of the body go on beating in their own way,

without producing any harmony, without having any co-ordination, without being directed by their conductor, it is useless. Who is the conductor of the organs? Who is the director? The orthodox science does not see that director, but this advanced science tells us that there is a director, and this director has the absolute control over the whole organism. He is the living soul. At the time of death he disconnects himself from the organs and leaves the body. *the soul which goes out*

In cases of trance, catalepsy and ecstasy, this living soul leaves the body, but the connection is not entirely cut off. There still remains some kind of connection. It is like the umbilical cord of a new-born babe which holds this entity as connected with the physical body. Therefore the physical body can be revived; but when the connection is entirely cut off, the body cannot be revived. Then it is called 'death'. That is the difference. This difference very few people understand.

But his living soul which goes out of the body at the time of death can be photographed. And the most delicate, sensitive instruments have been used to weigh the body, just before death and immediately after death, and making all allowances for the gases that escape, it has been found that the substance which passes out of the body at the time of death has a definite weight of about half an ounce or three-quarters of an ounce.

This fine substance that emanates from the body at the time of death, has a luminosity, and this luminous substance is photographed, and can be seen by the psychic, as passing out of the body. The whole body becomes enshrouded with a kind of luminous mist. I remember the case of a girl, whose brother died in Los Angeles, some years ago. I heard it from her mother. At the deathbed of her brother the young girl said : 'Mamma, mamma, see, there is a mist around his body, what is it?' But the mother could not see it. She said, it comes out of the body. Scientists have taken up that subject in Europe and are experimenting on this emanation. They call it ectoplasm. It is a vapour-like substance, but it has no particular form. It is like a cloud, but it can take a shape or a form, and can be photographed. What substance it is, they do not know ; but they cannot deny its existence.

Our human bodies are emanating that substance all the time. It can be seen especially at the time when there is a medium in a trance-like condition. The materializing mediums emanate that very strongly. I have seen it in seances, and in private seances when there was no professional medium at all. I have handled it, touched it. There is no particular feeling when we feel *ectoplasm*.

It cannot be described. But when it takes a definite shape, it becomes almost like

solid, like flesh of our own body. It can take any form.

At the time of death, all these vital forces that are governing the different organs, become concentrated and centralized into one point, before it leaves the body, and then we find the dying person's sight becomes dim, and the sensations of the body become faint, and gradually the whole body is going through a transformation. And in this transformation there are cases where the psychic powers of the individual manifest. Some of the dying persons develop clairvoyance and clairaudience. They can appear just at the time of death, either before or immediately after, to distant friends, in the form of an apparition, and they can give their messages. Such cases have been recorded by the scientists. The French Astronomer Camille Flammarion had written a book entitled *The Unknown* on that subject by gathering all the authentic reports made under the test conditions in different families, which describe the experiences of different people immediately at the time of death or after death. Fifteen hundred such records were gathered, and afterwards he selected quite a few out of them which were absolutely authentic, and published them in this book. Now, these records show that there is something which is not the result of the physical body. This *ectoplasm* is a substance which contains finer matter in vibration, and this finer matter

forms the under-garment of the soul, and the gross physical body is the outer garment. So, we have two bodies, the gross physical body and the finer or etherial body, which exists in each one of us. We may not feel it at present, because our sight and senses are looking for the gross, material, tangible objects. But it does not become tangible until it is brought down to the plane of our senses. The plane of our senses depends upon a certain degree of vibration. We can see light when the vibration of light is within the range of our vision. From red to violet our eyes can see, but if there be less vibrations than the red, we do not see it. In order to become visible it must vibrate in a certain way so that our organs might catch it, just as sound. Thus there are sounds which we do not hear at all, because our organ of hearing is imperfect. Similarly the etherial body cannot be seen until it is brought within the range of our vision by a process which is called *materialization*. It is a process which brings the finer matter, which is vibrating at a high rate, into a lower rate of vibration so that we can catch it, or get a glimpse of it.

The Vedânta philosophy is in perfect harmony with the conclusions of this latter kind of advanced scientists who hold that mind and the living soul are distinct factors in creating disease, bringing on death, and manufacturing the physical body. These ideas we

find in the Vedânta philosophy, which is the oldest system of philosophy in this world. The truth never grows old. The truth that was discovered five thousand years ago, is the same truth today, even if it be re-discovered by the modern scientists. For we must remember that truth is one. There is only one condition which can be absolutely true. The other are imitations of truth. That absolute truth might have been discovered ages before, but because of the lapse of time, the truth does not change. It is the eternal truth. Therefore we find that this finer body which I have just described is called in Vedânta the 'subtle body' (*sukṣma-sharīra*) which is the undergarment of the soul, and the gross physical body is the outer garment. When the soul has performed certain functions and has enjoyed certain pleasures, and has fulfilled certain desires, it finds that this gross physical body is no longer of any use, and it does not work right. Then the living soul leaves the gross body and manufactures another. Just as you have run a motormachine for two years, and after two years you find that the parts are worn-out and that it has 'done its service, then you leave it and get another. That is exactly what the living soul does. You cannot blame the soul for doing that. Because the body is the instrument through which the soul must manifest its powers, gain experiences, learn the lessons and gather knowledge. In

this way, the living soul is progressing in the process of evolution, rising from a lower to a higher state, and fulfilling its mission at every step of manifestation.

This idea of life will explain the mystery of death. Death is no longer mysterious when we know that there is an entity which has manufactured this instrument and which is dwelling in it, and which leaves it when the time comes. So death does not mean *the annihilation of anything, or destruction, or reduction into nothingness of anything, but it means disintegration*. It means that the instrument which has served its purpose must be thrown away, and another instrument must be rebuilt, out of the same material, perhaps. Who can tell that the atoms and molecules which made up the body of Cleopatra thousands of years ago, are not used in the bodies of living beings today? The same atoms and molecules that are buried in the dead bodies, have been dissolved and taken up by the vegetable life, have reappeared in the forms of plants or cereals, and we might be eating them and taking them in again, and they are forming parts of our own body. So, it is a revolution. Nothing is destroyed. The atoms and molecules go into one body, get out, and enter into another body. And in this continuous process of life and its manifestations, of evolution and involution, the living soul is the master. That living soul

has no death. Where will it go if it be destroyed? Do you think it will be reduced into nothingness? No, it is impossible. Science tells us that which has existed once, will continue to exist for ever. But the physical form of the body will die. It has no real existence. It is constantly changing. The form that you had when you were a little baby, is gone. The form that you had yesterday you have not got today. The form that you have this minute, you will not have it next minute. It is a continuous influx and reflux of matter. It is just like a whirlpool. The particles of matter are revolving and keeping up the shape according to the type that you have manufactured, so that there would be an identity.

Now, in this vortex of the particles of matter which are constantly in motion, there is something that is constant and unchangeable within us. That is our consciousness. If you ever see your own hand or any part of the body through X-ray, you will find like a revelation that your body consists of finer particles of mist-like matter, which are hanging around the outline of the bones. The gross physical body which appears as solid is not at all solid. It is just like a cloud, and we think it is solid only under certain conditions. At the time of death, the soul leaves this plane and enters into another plane of consciousness, which may be called

another dimension. We are now living in three dimensions. There is another dimension where the the sense-objects or any other feelings do not exist at all. It is beyond the limitaions of our physical body. Even the motions of the earth and of the planetary system do not exist there. We cannot imagine such a state unless we get a glimpse of that other dimension. It is called the fourth dimension. Where does the human soul go ? It does not go anywhere after death. It remains in the fourth dimension and cuts off all connections with the physical world of three dimensions. The third and fourth dimensions are related to each other just like a wheel within a wheel. We know, through the study of science, that the cells of the body are constantly moving. But do we feel that motion ? Are we conscious of it ? No. When we sit still, after detaching all the connections of our senses with the external world, we enjoy the changless quiet state of the fourth dimensions, we enjoy that tranquil state, but, otherwise there is a constant motion going on within our system, and that we are not conscious of. So, the departed soul is not conscious of the changes and conditons of the gross physical body.

Therefore, our bodies are nothing but the instruments, the garments of the soul. And so, Vedânta tells us that when a person dies, he is not really dead, but death means *a change—*

a change from one state of consciousness to another state of consciousness, and the soul throws away the gross physical body at the time of death just as we throw away our old worn-out garments. This idea is beautifully expressed in the Bhagavad Gita :

‘As we throw away our old worn-out garments and put on new ones, so the living soul, after using the body which is the gross physical garment, throws it away when it is worn-out, and manufactures a new one.’²⁵

25. “*Vāsdāmsi jīrnānīyathā vihāya, navāni grihṇātī*” *naro* *parāṇi ; tathā śharīrāni vihāya jīrnā nyanyāṇi samyakti navāni dehi.*”—Bhagavad Gītā, Ch. II, 22.

CHAPTER FOUR

SOUL AFTER DEATH

Different views of death and soul—*Katha Upanishad*—The Vedas—*Brahmaloka*—Law of *Karma*—*Pitriyāna*—*Devayāna*—The heavens—Higher conception of Vedānta—Zend Avestā on Spiritualism—Old and New Testaments—The Persians—The Egyptians—The Chaldeans—Pythagoras and Plato—What Plato believed—Vedānta on transmigration—Power exists in nature—The views of the so-called scientists—Race or species—Evolution—Soul is immortal—Vedānta cares not for heaven or hell.

The question what becomes of the human soul after death is as old as the first appearance of man on the earth. Almost all nations and all tribes of all climes and ages have asked this question amongst themselves and tried to solve this problem each according to its power, capacity, understanding and knowledge. Some tried to explain through peculiar theories and beliefs ; some through mythology, or poetry, and others through proper reasoning and scientific and logical demonstration. These various attempts of different thinkers to solve that ancient problem have ended in different conclusions which satisfy more or less the minds of various people in different countries. All the religions of the world are built upon the solution of this great puzzle. All the philosophies ancient or modern and even the science of today have spared no pains to unriddle that enigma of existence. Many have failed, many have stopped after deep investigations and researches without finding

any satisfactory explanation and have at last cried out in despair : It is beyond our knowledge, beyond the reach of human understanding. Some have become agnostics, other have denied the existence of any such thing as soul. Some said the soul of man exists as long as the soul exists. When the body dies the soul is also dead and gone. Some have arrived at the conclusion that there is no such thing as an individuality. It is like the flame of a lamp.²⁶ When there is no lamp there is no light, similarly when there is no body, there is no soul left. Everything ends with the death of the body. No sign of individuality is left after the dissolution of the physical form or the gross body. But after hearing all these various conclusions, does our mind stop to ask the same question within ourselves again and again ? No. Each individual needs an explanation which will satisfy the innate longing for immortal or deathless life with which each one of us is born. If we hear millions of times that there is no soul, still we cannot be convinced entirely that we shall cease to exist after death. We cannot think of such a state, we cannot believe our individuality will be lost after death. Such solutions do not appeal to our reason, do not satisfy our mind, nor do they bring to us consolation of any kind. In the *Katha Upanishad* we find that Yama, the ruler of

26. *Vide Notes.*

the departed and god of death says :

'Fools dwelling in the darkness of ignorance, self-conceited with vain knowledge and puffed up with the idea that they are truly wise, go round and round like blind led by blind.'²⁷

'Hereafter never rises before the mind of an ignorant child, deluded by the desire for wealth and worldly prosperity. Such people who say : This is the world, there is no other, come again and again under my sway.'²⁸

These words were uttered perhaps more than a thousand years before the birth of Jesus. One of the principal features of the writings of the ancient seers of Truth in India, was the knowledge of the pre-existence, continuity, and immortality of the human soul. If we see the most ancient writings, I mean the *Rig-veda*, there we read such prayers which show that they believed in the existence of the soul after death and immortal life. In the *Isha Upanishad* of the *Sukla-yajurveda* we find also :

'Oh God ! take me there where lies the source of everlasting light of the universe which is indestructible, where immortality reigns supreme, and make me immortal.'²⁹

Again in a funeral hymn we read :

'Go forth, go forth on these ancient paths on which our forefathers departed, having left all sins, go home

27. "*Avidyāyāmantare vartamānāḥ, svayam dhīrāḥ paṇḍitam-manyamānāḥ ; dandramyamānāḥ pariṇanti mudā, andhenaiva niyamānā yathāndhāḥ.*"—Katha Upanishad, 2.1.5.

28. "*Na sāmparāyaha pratibhāti vālam, pramadyantam viltamohena mudam ; ayam loko nāsti para iti māni, punaha punarvashamāpadyate me.*"—Katha Upanishad, 2.1.6

29. "*Agne naya supathā rāye asmān, visvāni deva vayundni vidvān ; yuyodhysmajuhuranameno, bhuiṣṭhm te na em ukhim vidhema.*"—Isha Upanishad, 2.1.18.

again and radiant in thy body, come together with them.'³⁰

There are hundreds of such passages in the Vedas which show clearly that the ancient Aryas believed in the existence of the soul after death. They believed in the spirit-world of the fathers or *pitris* where the departed soul goes after death; and the king of that world of fathers or *pitris* was Yama, the first of the mortals who became immortal.

The ancient Aryas or the Hindus believed in a heaven which they called *brahmaloka* or the kingdom of Brahmâ, the creator and Father of the universe. Then gradually when the ethical ideas of right and wrong became very strong in the minds of the Hindus, and when they understood the Law of *Karma* i.e., law of action and reaction, they believed that those who perform good and virtuous deeds in this life with the hope of getting reward go to the realm of the fathers and stay there as long as the results of good works will not be finished. When a departed individual has reaped the fruits of all of his good and virtuous works which brought him to that realm, he is bound to come down to the earth and to be born again according to his desires and actions

30. "Prehi prehi pathibhihi purvebhi yatra naha purve pitaraḥ pareyuhḥ ; ubha rajana svadhaya madanta, yamam pashyami varunam cha devam. Sam gacchasva pitribhihi sam yamenesthapurttena parama-uyoman. Hitvayabadyam punarstamehi sam gacchasva tanva suvar-chaha."—*Rig Veda*, 10.14.7-8. It can also be mentioned the third sloka of the *Isha Upanishad* (1.3) where there it is said : "Asuryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasāvritāḥ, tāṃste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke chātmanahano jaṇdhā."

of his past birth. The spirit-world of the fathers was supposed to be in the moon. From the very ancient times the Hindus had a belief that the moon was the land of the dead, was the repository of all the departed souls, and all the germs of life came to this earth from the moon. It has rained from the moon on this earth. The path by which the departed souls go to the lunar regions, and enjoy there all the pleasures and happiness as results of their own works and then return to the earth and are born again, was called *pitriyana* or the path of the forefathers.³¹ All mortals are bound to go by this path and return to this earth.

But those who do good works not for getting reward, nor seeking anything in return and who live the life of purity and righteousness will go to the *brahmaloka*, the realm of the gods. There they will stay in all glory until the end of a cycle of evolution. In the meantime if any one of them can attain self-knowledge, and the highest wisdom of oneness which is the absolute Reality, he will be free and will remain as one with the supreme Being all through eternity. Brahmâ 'the Creator, who is the king of this realm of the gods, will, in the end of one cycle, be free. Then in the beginning of another cycle another

31. "Samvatsaro vai Prajâpatihi ; tasyayane daksinanchottarancha. Tad ye ha vai tadistapurte kritamityupasate ; te chandramasameva lokamabhijayante. Ta eva punarâdvartante. * * Esa ha vai rayir-yaha Pitriyânahâ."—Prasna Upanishad, 1.9.

Brahmâ will arise from the infinite source of the absolute existence, intelligence, and bliss. He will be the Creator or Projector of that cycle. This process will continue all the time. This Brahmâ or Creator is like the Governor of a state. One fills the post for sometime, does his duty, then retires, another, in the meantime, becomes a candidate to be the Brahmâ, and so he becomes. In this way hundreds of Brahmâ have come and gone. But those who after attaining to this realm of the gods, do not gain the highest wisdom of oneness, come back at the beginning of the new cycle to this earth, and according to their desires and works, they will be born again as human beings of the highest order, most righteous and virtuous, will strive for the highest knowledge or realization of oneness. This is what they called *devayana*, the path of the *devas* or bright ones. These two paths are described fully in the *Upanishads* in a metaphorical language, which is difficult to understand. They describe how the departed souls go from this earth to those regions, what stages they pass through, what experiences they gather, how they return, how they are born and so forth. Those who go by *pitriyana* or the path of the *pitris*, are such people who are charitable, who do good to others and perform virtuous deeds. Such people, when die,

'go through smoke, then to night, then to dark fifteen days, from there to the six months when the sun moves

south, from there to the world of the fathers, from the world of the fathers to moon.'³²

These are the principal stages : smoke, night, dark fifteen days, and each of these has a spirit as its ruler. These spirits take care of the departed souls and help them as guides do in a strange country ; each of these spirits introduces them to the other spirits and thus they go very quickly to their proper destinations, there they will meet their relatives and departed friends. There the souls become favourite of the gods, and live there as long as their works will permit. Then when they return,

'they first take ethereal invisible bodies like minute germs of life, then they pass through ether into air, from air into the clouds, and then, they fall with rain drops on the earth, then they enter into human bodies through some kinds of food ; then they are born again.'³³

In this process, you must remember that, the law of what the modern evolutionists call *natural selection*, acts. By that law they will

32. "*Te dhumabhisambhavanti, dhumadrātrim, rātreraṇapaksiya m napaksam, apaksiyamānapaksadyan sanmāsan daksinaditya eti, masebhaha pīṛilokam, pīṛilokācchandram**."—Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad, 6.2.16. Vide also *Devayāna* in Rigveda, X. 19.1, and *Pitriāna* in Rigveda, X.2.7. Cf. Kāushitaki Upanishad, 1.4.

33. (a) "*Māsebhya pīṛilokam, pīṛilokādākāśham, ākāśhacandramasam, esa sono rājā, taddevānāmannam, tam devā bhaksayanti. Tasmin yavat sampātamusitvā athaitamevādāhvānam punanirvarttate yathetam ; ākāśham ; ākāśhādāvdyum, vāyurbhuvā dhūmo bhavati, dhūmo bhutvā abhram bhavati. Abhram bhutvā meghe bhavati, meghe bhutvā pravarsati, te iha vrihi-yavāosadhi-vanaspatayastilamśā iti jāyante ; * *...yo yo hyannamatti, yo retaha sinchati, tadbhuya eva bhavati.*"—Chāndogya Upanishad, 5.10.4-6.

(b) "** Akāśhādāvdyum, vāyorvristim, vristeḥ pṛithivim, te pṛithivim prāpyānnam bhavanti, te punaha puruṣāgnau huyante taho yosāgnau jāyante lokān pratyutithāyina, ta evamevānuparivarttante**"—Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad, 6.2.16

come through food into such bodies where they will find suitable environments and conditions to fulfil their desires and to reap the results of their own works. During this process of return their whole mental state, feelings, intelligence become contracted and they do not feel anything nor can they remember anything. Then they become good or bad according to their latent tendencies which they possess, and which they want to manifest.

But those who worship God with pure heart and sincere devotion, who are righteous and work for others without any hope of getting reward and are unselfish and believe in an extra-cosmic personal God with a certain name and form and are dualistic or monotheistic in their ideas, after their death, will go to heaven by *devayana*, or the path which leads to God. The *Upanishad* also says,

‘They go first to light, from light to day, to the waxing half of the moon, to six months when the sun goes north, then to the place of bright spirits or *devas*, then to the sun, then to the region of lightning, there a spirit of a high order comes and takes them to the world of *Brahmā* where they dwell until the end of the cycle.’³⁴

34. (a) “*Te ya evametadviduhu, he chāmi aranye shraddhām satyam-upāsate, te’rchirabhisambhavanti, archiso’hāranha āpuryamānapaksam, āpuryamānapakṣādyān sanmāśānudangnāditya eit; māsebhya deva-lokam, deva lokādādityam, adityādvaidyutam; tan vaidyutan puruso manasa etya brahmalokan gamayati**.”—*Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, 6.2.15.

(b) *Māsebhyaḥ samvatsaram, samvatsarādādityam, ādityācchandramasam, chandramaso vidyutam, tatpuruso’mānavaha, sa enān brahma gamayati, esa devayānaha paṇthā iti*.”—*Chāndogya Upanishad*, 5.10.2.

(c) “*Agnirjyotirahaha shuklaha sanmāśā uttarāyaṇam; tatra prayata gacchanti Bhrama Brahmavido janāḥ*.”—*Bhagavad Gītā*, Ch. VIII, 24. (Vide also *Prashnopanishad*, 1.10.)

Then they may return in the next cycle if they do not realize the highest truth of oneness. In this case you will have to understand that all these light, day etc., must be taken as stages under the guidance of spirits that are at their head or their rulers.³⁵

These mythological descriptions and poetic imaginations of the ancient simple minded thinkers of India are considered by many as childish talk and by some as nonsense. Whatever that might be, one thing, which we learn from all these descriptions, is that those ancient thinkers understood that the the soul cannot be destroyed after death that it has some purpose to fulfil and that it must continue to manifest either on this earth or in some other planet according to its desires and works; and that all these heavens are transitory and not unchangeable reality. This is a great gain indeed. In very few religions you will find such an idea. All religions, such as Zoroastrianism, Christianity or Mohammedanism, end in going to heaven, and they describe heaven as eternal and permanent and imperishable place. But the Hindu religion does not teach that. In other religions the highest ideal is going to a heaven where we can get many things which we cannot get here and where all enjoyments will come incessantly without any pain or

35. Cf. *Chândogya Upanishad*, 5.10.3-6, *Brihadâranyaka Upanishad*, 6.2.15-16, and *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, 8.24-26

trouble. But with the Hindus this is not the highest state desirable. All these heavens and places of enjoyments are phenomenal and transitory, (even if they last for millions of years still millions of years when compared to eternity is nothing). It is for this reason Krishna, the Incarnation of the universal Spirit, says to Arjuna :

‘All the different worlds of spirits, gods and others, beginning with the highest heaven of Brahmâ, are places from where one must return, but he who attains to me the supreme Spirit, will remain with me for ever, will never be bound by any law of nature.’³⁶

Therefore, in Vedânta you do not find any special value of these heavens nor does it deny its existence. Of course, in the heavens, the soul will stand face to face with God before His throne, God, will ask him : Who art thou ? The soul will answer : ‘*What Thou art that I am.*’³⁷ But along with the higher conceptions of Vedânta, all these heavens and desires for heavens gradually become quite insignificant.

36. “*Abrahmabhuvandllokaḥ punarāvartino’rjuna ; mamupetya tu Kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate.*”—Bhagavad Gītā, Ch. VIII, 16.

37. In the *Sāṅkhāyana Aranyaka* (Ch. III, 1-7), we find, it is described in a beautiful way. There the king Gangyayani (Gargyayani ?) said to Aruni and his son Svetaketu : “Those who depart from this world all go to the moon. Their breaths swell the first fortnight (of the moon) ; in the second it brings them to birth again. The moon is also the door of the world of heaven. * * it rains down on earth, becoming itself rain. * * Him, when he has arrived, it asks : ‘Who art thou ?’ To it should he reply, ‘From the light I came as see, O seasons from that produced as the fifteen-fold fatherland. * * I am born and again born as the twelve month (year) and the thirteen-month (year), from the twelve-fold, the thirteen-fold father. I know this and I recognise this. Then do ye bear me, seasons, to deathlessness. By that truth, that penance, I am the season of the seasons.’ ‘Who art thou ?’ I am Thou.’ He then sends him on”.—Cf. also *Kaushitaki-brāhmaṇopaniṣad*, 1.1-6.

This idea of a personal God sitting on a throne and receiving the pious souls we find in the ancient writings of the Hindus, I mean the Vedas.

In the Zend-Avesta we find a similar idea, of a personal God, Ahura Mazda sitting on a throne and judging the conduct of the departed souls and rewarding or punishing them accordingly. The Hindus did not believe at first in any hell, but the Parsees did. In the Avesta we read what happens when a man dies.³⁸ The ideas of heaven and hell which we find in the Avesta, influenced to a great extent the Jewish and later Mohammedan idea of heaven through the Jews. We know that the Old Testament is silent about the fate of the soul after death. In the New Testament however we find such ideas which perfectly coincide with the Persian descriptions. The Persians believe in the last Day of Judgment and a general resurrection when the victory of good over evil will be secured. The ancient Hebrews did not bother their head much about what becomes of the soul after death. They believed that God breathed life into man, and that breath came from God and returns after the death of the body. But afterwards when the Jews came in contact with the Persians they accepted their ideas. The Egyptians, as has been said before, had a belief that the soul of man is a *double*,

38. *Vide* Notes.

like a shadow which remains as long as the body remains. But if the body mutilated or destroyed soul will be mutilated and destroyed.

The Chaldeans also believed in a *double* which will be annihilated if the bodies were destroyed. They expected a resurrection of the corpse. This belief we find amongst the Christians of today. Amongst the Greek philosophers, Pythagoras, Plato and their disciples believed in the immortality of the soul and in the theory of transmigration. Plato's ideas regarding the nature of the soul and his descriptions about what becomes after death are exactly the same as we find in the *Upanishads*. But Plato believed in a place of punishment for the evil-doers. Those who have done wicked deeds and sinful acts, will go through sufferings and penalties and when they are purified will obtain rewards for their good deeds and virtuous acts. Plato believed that the human soul may migrate to human body or to a beast, and may return again to a human body.

Thus there are many speculations regarding the future existence. Now let us understand clearly what Vedânta has to say on this point. In the first place Vedânta says there is no such thing as death which means destruction. It admits death in the sense of a change of forms. This kind of death is a constant attendant of life. Life is impossible without

death or change of forms. We are dying at every moment. After every seven years it is said that our bodies completely renew all its constitutive elements ; but still the form is preserved. Although every particle of body is changed still we continue to exist. Our continuity is not broken. We remember things and events that happened fourteen or twenty-one years ago. This continuity of the conscious agent cannot be explained by any physical or chemical laws. Then again Vedânta gives a death-blow to the materialistic theory by saying that thought or feeling or intelligence can never be produced by any mechanical or molecular motion. Motion produces motion and nothing else. Therefore motion of the atoms of the body will never produce feeling or conscious state. It is due to some other higher power which we call thought-force or soul-power.

That power is neither yours nor mine ; it exists in nature. The whole universe is like an ocean of one living substance which contains the soul-power, the source of intelligence and consciousness. Our present consciousness is a reflection or manifestation of that infinite source of consciousness. In an ocean there are rising innumerable waves. If we study minutely we shall see that each wave will continue to move on and on and if the ocean be infinite, it will never stop, it will move on from eternity to eternity,

and ultimately it will come back to the same place from where it started. Similarly our individual lives are nothing but so many individual waves of that infinite ocean. Each wave is moving onward to complete the infinite Circle. So each one of us has a beginningless past and an endless future. The so-called surface scientists of today do not admit it; they are very busy in thinking of the race or species. They ignore the fact that if there were no individuals there would not have been any race or species. Race or species is an abstract concept which exists in our mind; it is the result of our generalization while the individuals are the undeniable facts of nature. Each of these waves start as simple germs of life which contain all the potentialities which will be manifested in future and which try to make those potentialities into actualities by expression or manifestation through the various forms. The process by which it expresses is called *evolution* which means *change of forms*. This manifestation would have been impossible if the forms were not changed, if the old forms were not thrown aside and new forms developed. Such being the case, this change of form is what we call 'death.' The death is the death of a particular form and not of the substance nor of the force. Death of one form reproduces or gives birth to another form, as the death of the seed-form produces the tree-form and so forth. Again

that which is reproduced will die and then reproduce another and so on.

Therefore, Vedânta says that which has birth must die, and that which is dead must be born again.³⁹ There is no birth or death in the soul life. It is eternal and immortal. It takes that form which it wants to take. Outward form has its cause in mental form and mental or thought form is the result of our desire or craving or intense longing. So our future life will be determined by our desires, tendencies, longings and works we do. Vedânta does not care for heaven or hell. It says those who want to go to heaven, will create a heaven and will go there and enjoy.

Those who think of hell will see hell. Those think that they are sinners are really sinners. What thou thinkest thou shalt become. So all these heavens and hells *are the different conditions of our mind*. They do not exist outside. As long as we are in the state of ignorance we have such dreams. But when we realize the Truth or oneness of our real nature with the universal Spirit we are free from birth or death, heaven or hell. Our real nature returns to its pure condition and reigns in its own glory all through eternity.

39. "Jâtasya hi dhruvo mrityurdhruvam janma mritasya cha."—Bhagavad Gitâ, Ch. II, 27.

CHAPTER FIVE

REBIRTH OF THE SOUL

The term soul—Materialistic thinkers—Everything is subject to the law of cause and effect—Scientific thinkers—A germ of life—Mind and its functions—Psychic powers—Rebirth of the soul does not mean the same thing as transmigration—Metempsychosis and reincarnation—Births according to the merits and demerits of deeds—What is transmigration—Migrating substance—Mythological theory of transmigration—The belief of the Hindus—Rational minds do not believe in the retrogression of the human souls into animal forms—Doctrine of reincarnation is based upon the theory of evolution—The passages of the *Upanishads*—Reincarnation of the soul does not mean the same thing as expressed by the Buddhist philosophers—One-birth theory—The Christian theologians on reincarnation—The followers of Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism—Time has no absolute existence—What nature teaches—The Greek philosophers about doctrine of reincarnation—One-birth theory and heredity do not explain the mystery of rebirth—The protoplasmic cell—Theories against heredity—Illustrations of reincarnations.

Rebirth of the soul presupposes its existence as an intelligent entity; it is separable and independent of the gross physical body. By the term *soul*, we mean that centre of self-conscious activity which thinks, reacts on the personal or external phenomena, and consciously performs the functions of life. How this soul comes into existence, and where does it go after the dissolution of the body, are questions which rise in almost every human mind, and they are as old as the appearance of the first man upon this earth. From ancient times, philosophers and seers of Truth of all countries and all nations, have made various attempts to unravel the mysteries of the birth, life and death of the individuals upon this

planet. Again and again it has been asked : Why do animals and human beings suddenly appear into existence, live for some time, fulfill certain desires, perform varvellous deeds, display some wonderfull powers and unexpectedly pass away being forced, as it were, to leave their plans and projects of their lives, half-finished and half-fulfilled ?

Why is it that some come into existence to die within a few days, or weeks, or years, without obtaining an opportunity of knowing or gaining any experience in this vast world of phenomena ? Are these events accidental, or is there a law that governs all these aimless events and phenomena that are happening everyday before our eyes ? Are these individual souls coming and going away without any purpose, or is there an aim behind all these appearances ?

Human minds cannot rest contented until these questions of vital importance are solved. Materialistic thinkers of the Western countries have thrown overboard all such questions by denying the plan and aim and purpose of individual life, as well as the existence of soul. They explain this phenomena by saying that intelligence is caused by non-intelligent forces of nature governed by mechanical laws, —some have gross forms, some finer and the appearance of men and animals are caused by some anatomical combination of atoms and molecules in the process of cosmic

evolution. According to them, there is no soul, no life after death, consequently, it is useless to ask such questions ; it is a waste of time and energy to bother our heads regarding the existence of soul or its birth and rebirth, what good would it do ? But the materialistic explanations do not satisfy the minds of the seekers after truth, nor do they succeed in stopping all these questions which spontaneously rise in human minds ; on the contrary, it can be shown that the combination of atoms and molecules can never produce consciousness and intelligence, which is the important factor and only property of the living soul.

Motion produces nothing but motion. It is impossible for the organic functions to produce the knower or translator of those functions into sensation, ideas and thoughts. In the organs, the function of motion will never be that which is not motion, like consciousness or intelligence. No one has ever succeeded in proving that the consciousness or intelligence is an act of motion. If, however, we study the phenomena of nature with the help of modern science, we understand that the phenomena of accident or chance has no room in the chain of phenomena, but is guided by the universal law of cause and effect, which is as the law of causation.

Every event, that has occurred in the past, or will happen in future, must have some

definite cause behind it, and by denying this law, we not only deny the truth of nature, but we deny also the fundamental principle of modern science which is *something cannot come out of nothing*. Applying this truth to the facts of birth and life of individuals, whether animal or human, we understand that they are subject to the law of cause, they are governed by the law of cause and effect; and the cause of life on this earth of all individuals is different in each. They are not accidental appearances, and they cannot be accidental. We inquire into the cause that produced the work,—the conscious activity of the individual. Does it exist outside of the effect as some people believe that the cause of the human being is some supernatural being dwelling outside of the universe? Does this cause exist outside of the effect, or does it form a part and parcel of the effect itself?

This is most puzzling and many of the advanced thinkers have failed in their efforts to understand the proper relation that exists between a cause and its effect. Upon the proper knowledge of the relation of a cause to its effect depends the solution of the problem.

All the scientific thinkers of the world come to the conclusion that the true cause of a thing does not lie outside of a thing, but in the thing itself, just as the cause of a tree does not lie outside of the tree, but in the tree itself. Cause means *the unmanifested state*

of the effect, and effect means the manifested state of the cause.

The whole tree lies in a dormant state in the seed, and nothing comes from outside of the seed, but it was in the seed. The external conditions and environments only bring out that which existed potentially, or helped in the manifestation of the latent powers. The seed of an oak tree can never produce any other thing than an oak tree, however powerful the environmental conditions may be. The environmental conditions cannot add to the seed one iota to that which did not exist in the seed from the very beginning. Therefore, that which we find in the effect, must have existed in the causal state from the very beginning. All the peculiarities as manifested in the effect, and the tendencies that are to be found in the effect, are nothing but the expressions of the same peculiarities, same tendencies, same properties, that existed in the germ of life from the very beginning.

Applying this truth to the phenomena of birth and life of individuals on this earth, we can understand the process and every step of the evolution of the germ of life. Modern science tells us that a germ of life, by going through the process of evolution, can appear as a human being. If this be true, then everything that exists in a human being, must have existed in a germ of life from the very beginning in a potential state. We shall have to

admit that mind and all its functions, such as desires, tendencies, must have existed in that germ of life, must have remained latent until the time had come when these latent powers found favourable conditions for their expression. They have not come into existence out of nothing, because the law is that which exists, must have existed from the very beginning; otherwise we would run the risk of committing the error of admitting the fallacious argument that something could have come out of nothing, that something has come into existence from that state which had no trace of it whatever.

These germs of life are nothing but minute, invisible centres of forces clothed with minute particles of etherial matter. Having no form, they can appear in any form, either human or animal, in order to manifest and express certain powers lying dormant in those germs of life. Although these germs of life are to evolution, growth and progress, still they are not destructible like the gross physical forms of the universe. These germs possess vital force as well as mental powers and intelligence.

If you study the forms of the psychic powers of the microcosmic animal-tribes, or micro-organisms, you will understand that the minute germs of life express powers and intelligence. Even these germs of life manifest these powers through gross forms by manu-

facturing them. But that manufacture depends upon the law which governs the gross material universe. And at the time of the dissolution of the gross forms, all these manifested powers conserve and remain latent in a minute subtle germ of life, by the law of persistence of force, until the time comes when the conditions become favourable for the remanifestation of those powers that have become dormant.

These germs of life are called by various names. We may call them the vehicles of consciousness. Some call them individual souls, or egos. The Indian philosophers describe them as subtle bodies of individuals *sukshma-shariram*. These subtle bodies, being governed by the law of cause and effect, being subject to the law of action and reaction, appear again, either on this plane or some other to express some powers, to manifest the latent tendencies and to gain knowledge and experience by coming in contact with these objects of senses which exist on the material plane.

The reappearance of the germs of life in gross physical forms, whether animal or human, is called manifestation which is known and understood by the theory of rebirth of the soul, or the doctrine of reincarnation, as it is called in the Vedânta philosophy. By rebirth of the soul, Vedânta does not mean the same thing as transmigration, or metempsychosis. In Western countries, there are many thinkers

and writers who do not understand the difference that exists between transmigration and the theory of reincarnation, or rebirth. Consequently they write and create great confusion in the minds of the readers.

But the transmigration, or metempsychosis⁴⁰ has a meaning entirely different from that of reincarnation. That means the passing of the soul from one body after death into another. Or, in other words, the soul, after dwelling in one body for a certain length of time, leaves it at the time of death and enters into another body which is ready to receive it, in order to gain experience and knowledge in those lives, or through those forms, or to reap the results of the works or deeds of the previous lives. It may enter into a human form or into an animal form. The doers that have performed good deeds will enter into human forms, or angelic forms, but the doers that have performed wicked deeds will appear in animal forms and, after remaining as animals for some time, will perhaps take human forms and then angelic forms and go on and return again to this earth in the form of higher animals. Thus transmigration means *the revolution of the soul from body to body and excludes the idea of growth, progress and evolution from lower to higher states of consciousness.*

40. *Vide Notes.*

The migrating substance, being of constant quantity and quality, chooses the forms and bodies according to the bent of character or desires. It is not governed by the law of causation, or action and reaction. In ancient Egypt they believed that after the death of the body the souls travelled for thousands of years from one body to another. Pythagoras, Plato and their followers believed in the theory of transmigration and metempsychosis of the soul.⁴¹

Pythagoras says :

'After death the rational mind, having been freed from the chains of the body, assumes an ethereal vehicle and passes into the region of the dead where it remains till it is sent back to this world to inhabit some other body human or animal. After undergoing successive purgations, when it is sufficiently purified, it is received among the gods and returns to the eternal source from which it first proceeded.'

Plato also believed in this theory. He describes in an allegorical way, how and where the souls go through the process of transmigration. He describes in *Phaedrus* :

'In the heaven, Zeus, the Father and Lord of all creatures, drives his winged car, ordering all things and superintending them. * * Thus when the soul is unable to follow and fails to behold the vision of Truth, she sinks beneath the double load of forgetfulness and vice, her feathers fall from her and she drops to earth and is born again and again as human beings or as animals.'

Plato says ten thousand years must elapse before the soul can return to the place from which she came, because she cannot grow her

41. Vide Notes.

wings in less time. After the first thousand years, the good and evil souls come together to choose their lives. Instead of reaping the natural consequences of their previous deeds and misdeeds, they are allowed to choose the bodies according to the experience and bent of character. Some, being disgusted with mankind, choose animal bodies. They like to be lions, tigers, eagles and other beings, while others desire to try again becoming human beings and see what experience they can get.⁴²

Through this mythological theory, you can understand what idea is conveyed by the theory of transmigration, or metempsychosis. In India, from ancient times the theory of transmigration prevailed, but it was different from that of Plato. The Hindus never believed that the souls were allowed to choose their lives according to the bent of character, but they were bound to reap the natural consequences of their deeds and misdeeds and enjoy or suffer by coming in bodies, either animal or human. But even today there are many who believe in the transmigration of souls: that the souls after death can go back to animals and live as animals for some time and then go up to heaven and live there for some time. But the rational minds in India do not believe in the retrogression of the human souls into animal forms, they believe in the doctrine of the rebirth of the soul, or reincarnation.

42. Swâmi Abhedânanda : *Reincarnation*, pp. 89-90.

The doctrine of reincarnation is based upon the theory of evolution, and depends upon the law of cause and sequence, action and reaction, or the law of *Karma*. These germs of life come into existence to fulfil certain powers and desires and to gain certain experience. They do not go back to the animal forms, but they live on the human plane and continue to exist on the human plane, being subject to the law of evolution. The germ of life admits the growth and progress of the souls from lower to higher states of consciousness through experience and knowledge of the phenomenal world. It is true, however, that there are passages in the writings of the *Upanishads* which apparently refer to the retrogression of the human souls into animal nature, but they do not necessarily mean that these souls will have to take animal forms.⁴³ How absurd it is to think that the human souls, after manifesting human powers, will choose a dog-body to manifest those powers; how can a lower contain that which is greater? But there may be some people who may live like animals even when they have human bodies, as we may find among us many people like cats and dogs and snakes in human form and they are often more vicious than natural cats, dogs or snakes. That kind of retrogression to the animal nature is the result of wicked deeds and wicked thoughts on the animal plane. These deeds and thoughts

43. *Vide Notes.*

must produce their result in the manifestation of the animal nature. But this retrogression is only temporary. It helps the individual souls in gaining the experience on the animal plane only for a time until they come out of those states, after which they will manifest the higher powers latent in those germs of life. Wicked thoughts and deeds are only our own mistakes which we have committed on account of our ignorance. No one is born so perfect as to commit no mistakes whatever, so every mistake is a great teacher in the long run. We must understand this. But, as it is impossible for a human soul to gain all experiences in one short period of one hundred years, or more or less, we must have to admit the doctrine of evolution and, consequently, the theory of the rebirth, or the reincarnation of the souls, or germs of life, in order to fulfill the purpose of life and gain experience in all the different phases of evolution.)

The reincarnation of the soul does not mean the same thing as expressed by the Buddhist philosophers. The Buddhists deny the permanence of the soul entity, or the permanent entity of the soul. They say that the individual, after the death of the body, appears again in some other form, but that being is not the same being, but a similar being, a being of a similar nature. That creates a difficulty. If we perform certain acts, in order to reap the results of those acts, we need the

same individual entity. It must admit that there is the same continuation of the same being, otherwise, it would be just like a person eating food and another getting satisfaction ; there would be no law, no harmony in this universe. Those who do not believe in the doctrine of reincarnation, believe either in the one-birth theory or in the theory of heredity. But these two theories do not satisfy all the questions of the human minds, and they do not explain the difference. Those who believe in the one-birth theory cannot explain why the individual souls come into existence, live for a certain time and go away, and where do they go ?

They do not understand the purpose of life, which is to gain knowledge and experience, and they cannot understand why little children live and die within a few days, or weeks or or months, without any opportunity of knowing anything, what purpose of life has been served by that ? The Christian theologians believing in the dogma of one-birth, explain that these little children, who die after birth, will go to heaven and be saved by the eternal Father and enjoy celestial bliss throughout eternity. If the Christians only believe in this dogma, they ought to pray for the death of their children at the time of birth and ought to be thankful to the merciful Father when their little babes die and the grave closes over their dead bodies. But that theory does not explain

the difficulties, it takes for granted certain dogmatic solutions which do not explain any of the difficulties, and they are neither rational nor scientific.

Three great religions of the world, Judaism and its two offsprings, Christianity and Moham-medanism, still uphold that theory of life and death. They believe that we have come into existence, remain for a short time and pass away either going to heaven or to the place of eternal punishment. Those who believe in such a theory cannot make their minds free from the impressions that they have received during their childhood. The followers of these three great religions believe that the souls come into existence, being created for the first time out of nothing, and continue to do certain works, being forced by that Creator, but they will have to enjoy or suffer all throughout eternity for the works performed during the short existence and which they were forced to do, not by their own free will, but by the will of the Creator who put that kind of free will, vicious or virtuous into human beings. It is as absurd as that one person who is forced to do all the acts if another person, is forced to receive the punishment or reward for the acts that are not done by himself.

The only way out of this difficulty is to admit the permanence of the germ of life. Because, if these souls exist today and will continue to exist throughout eternity, they

must have existed from eternity, and there must be the reappearance of that which existed in some form or other.

There is another consideration and that is this : The beginning, the ending and the continuing are the conception of human minds that depend upon our conception of time, but we all know that time has no absolute existence.⁴⁴ It is only a form of our knowledge of our nature as related to the experience of nature outside.⁴⁵ This conception vanishes at the time of death, just as it does every night when we are in sound sleep. Can you remember, or do you have the idea of time when your mind is absolutely resting in sound sleep ? No, you cannot. That conception vanishes for the time being. The souls wake up after the sleep of death just in the same way as in the spring after sleeping through the long, hard winter ;—as a chrysalis in the bed of cocoon spun by itself in the month of autumn. Nature teaches us this truth of rebirth by this resemblance between sleep and death by the rejuvenation of a chrysalis in the spring. Souls wake up after the sleep of death and put on new garments of new bodies in order to to fulfill certain purposes and gain certain

44. In Advaitic conception time is regarded as an appearance, an effect. (*kāryam*) of *avidyā* or *māyā*. It has merely an empirical reality, but is transcended in the ultimate Reality.

45. Immanuel Kant also says in his *Critique of Pure Reason* : "Time is nothing but the form of our internal intuition. Take away the peculiar condition of our sensibility, and the idea of time vanishes, because it is not inherent in the objects, but in the subject only that perceives them"—*Max Muller's Translation*.

experiences, to reap the results of their previous actions, being subject to the law of cause and effect just in the same way as we throw away our old clothes and put on new ones. Therefore it is said in Vedânta :

‘As we throw away our old garments and put on new ones, so the individual ego, or germ of life, after throwing away the old body, manufactures new form for the purpose of fulfilling the aim of life.’⁴⁶

Through this doctrine of reincarnation the vast majority of people in the old world, in India, China and Japan, have found consolation in their lives and solved the extremely difficult problems that disturb the minds of the scientists and other thinkers of the world. Even in the Western countries, philosophers like Plato, Plotinus, Proclus, Kant, Schelling, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Lessing, Bruno, Goethe and others ; Poets like Wordsworth, Tennyson ; theologians like Dr. Julius, Mueller, Dr. Doner, Ruckert, and others have believed in the doctrine of transmigration, or rebirth of the soul. The ancient philosophers like Origen believed in the doctrine of reincarnation, because this is the only doctrine that satisfies human minds and all the questions on this subject scientifically and explains facts.

If the one-birth theory and heredity do not explain all the difficulties, we ought to try another theory, which is better and more satisfactory. At one time the idea of reincarnation and rebirth of the soul spread so

wonderfully amongst the Christians of ancient times that Justinian was obliged to pass a law in the Council of Constantinople in 538 A.D. to stop the spread of this doctrine which would kill the Christian dogma. The law was this :

‘Whoever shall support the mythical presentation of the pre-existence of the soul, and consequently the wonderful opinion of its return, let him be Anathema.’

Those who do not believe in the doctrine of reincarnation try to explain these difficulties through the theory of heredity but does this theory explain all the questions ?

Suppose there is young man twenty five years old and he has inherited certain peculiarities and characteristics like talent for music, or possessing a crooked nose, or a peculiar giggle in his laugh, in which he resembles his grandfather. Now this young man according to the supporters of this theory, has inherited all these things from his grandfather who died six years before his birth. All these peculiarities were handed down to this young man before he was born, before he came into a human body, and when he was like a protoplasmic cell, or a jellylike substance, which has neither nose nor mouth. Even at that time he inherited that queer giggle and crooked nose through his grandfather.

This protoplasmic cell was smaller than a pin's head and if you look at it through a microscope you could not distinguish it from it from that of a dog or a cat, or a bird or a

tree. Even then it had all these peculiarities. Before the brain and nerve-centres began to take forms, the musical talents and tendencies possessed by this young man existed in the protoplasmic cell which came down from his grandfather. Does it not seem to you absurd to think that one protoplasmic cell can contain all these tendencies, the crooked nose and giggle and talents when there was neither brain, nor mouth nor nose? There are many scientists who believe in the theory of heredity, but they cannot explain how one single cell can contain all the mental and physical traits and characteristics and peculiarities of father and grandfather, mother and grandmother.

You have millions of cells in this human body. But what kind of cell is that which can reproduce all these powers and tendencies which are possessed by each one of us at present? This is the most difficult of all problems the scientific minds have encountered.

There have been many theories against this theory of heredity. We must not forget that an organism can inherit only where there is predisposition to inherit, otherwise it cannot.⁴⁷ Supposing this theory of heredity a truth, what have we learned? From the theory of heredity we come to know that the whole of the young man existed before his birth in the protoplasmic cell, the whole character of him

47. This has been elaborately discussed elsewhere in connection with the discussion of Weisman's theory of the 'continuity of the germ-plasm.' Cf. Swāmi Abhedānanda: *Reincarnation*, p. 35.

was there. Does it not seem the same thing as the pre-existence of the human being ? The whole human nature must have existed in that germ of life in some form or other ; all the powers, intelligence, desires must have existed there, otherwise we will have to admit that these powers have come out of nothing, which would be absurd and unscientific.

Again, the theory of heredity cannot explain all the causes which produce genius and prodigies. On the contrary, the doctrine of rebirth of the soul, or reincarnation, explains all these things satisfactorily.

Why was it that the shepherd Mangimamelo could calculated like an automatic machine when he was five years of age ? The child Zerab Colburn, when he was under eight years of age, could answer the most difficult of mathematical problems without any figures. Mozart, the great musician, could repeat a sonata when he was four years of age, and when he was eight years of age, he wrote an opera. Hoffman could play beautifully before he was ten years of age. Blind Tom did not inherit his powers from his parents.. He was a slave, and born of slave parents on a plantation. One day he went to his master's parlour when the family was at dinner and he sat at the piano and began to play music he had never heard. He was a typical Negro, and his intellect was very poor, but in music he was a master. He could compose music by himself and play his

own compositions for three quarters of an hour, and after once hearing music, he could repeat it note for note. He never had a lesson and could not have understood lessons. These illustrations disprove the theory of family heredity, or the theory of 'cumulative heredity'.⁴⁸ Those who believe in the theory of heredity say that genius is the result of cumulative heredity, which presents itself by gradual degree, i.e., from less germs to greater and still greater and so on. But in the whole history of the genealogy of geniuses all the great examples like Shakespeare, Lincoln, or Jesus or Buddha or Sankaracharya, we do not find any trace if genius in the family of these great men, on the contrary, their parents and grand-parents did not show such powers.

There had been many shepherds in Galilee at that time, but Jesus the Christ was the only one who could not inherit anything from the shepherd nature of his parents and relatives. There has been many young princes and kings in India, but there was only one Buddha. Why was it? Does the theory of heredity explain all these instances? No. If we do exist now, we cannot think of our annihilation or destruction. Destruction, in the sense of annihilation, is impossible in this world of reality. If we exist today, we cannot think of our non-existence either before or after. Where did the soul exist before the birth of

48. Vide Swāmi Abhedānanda : *Reincarnation*. pp. 46-47.

this body no one can tell. We cannot find the beginning of the soul or the end.

There are some objections that have been raised by many who do not believe in the doctrine of reincarnation. One question has been asked very often : 'If we did exist before, why do we not remember ?' If we examine our own lives, we do not remember many things, but still we know we did them. Do you remember what you did on the eighth of February twenty five years ago in the afternoon ? Perhaps you will say you do not know, because you cannot remember. Our memory is only that power of the mind by which we can recall the latent impressions and ideas stored up in the mind. Memory always grows, and if we develop our memory we will remember many things which we do not know at present. In India, there are many Yogîs who can remember their past experiences. In ancient Greece, it is known that ancient philosophers came to India to find out the secret of their wonderful knowledge which the Hindus possessed. Some people say if they could remember the past, how happy they would be ; but perhaps if they did, they would make a bad use of their present.

If you knew you were going to have some great misfortunes within a few days or months, would you be equal to performing the duties on hand at present ? You would constantly remember those misfortunes. We should not try

to satisfy our idle curiosity by trying to know what we were in the past, but let us make our present useful and do such acts that will help us in becoming better than what we are today ; make the best use of your present until the time comes when the higher illumination will reveal to you all the past and future like a panorama before our spiritual eyes and then we shall be able to say as Srî Krishna said to Arjuna :

“ *Both you and I have passed through many births, you know them not, while I know them all.*”⁴⁹

CHAPTER SIX

THE SOUL AND ITS DESTINY

Questions of the soul and its destiny—Popular belief among the Christians—The idea of eternal life among different nations—Arguments of the scientists about destiny of the soul—Psychology on destiny—The old materialistic theory about it—Self-consciousness cannot be produced by the combination of matter—Psychological researches—What are matter, knowledge and consciousness—Matter produces nothing but matter—Vedānta explains the destiny of the soul—Modern Spiritualism.

The question of the soul and its destiny spontaneously arises in all minds, whether cultured or uncultured. No other question touches the hearts of men and women so deeply. No other problem arouses their interest so much or sets their minds to thinking as this universal problem concerning the nature of the human soul and its destiny. From ancient times, philosophers, sages, thinkers and prophets have tried their best to solve this great problem, to answer this momentous question. In their attempts they arrived at various conclusions from time to time. Some of their conclusions appealed to some minds. Some say that there is no such thing as the soul, which can exist independent of the body ; which is separate from the body ; while others deny its existence entirely. Those, who believe in the existence of the soul as an independent thing from the body, say that it will continue to exist after death,—that it is immortal.

But this question does not disturb the minds of those who deny the existence of the soul or believe that the soul is not independent of the body, but that it depends on the body,—as long as the body lives the soul lives as the body. There may be some persons among us who may be positively sure that they have no soul. But all the religions aim to lead the human mind to the belief that the soul is eternal, that it continues to exist after death, that it enjoys the pleasure and happiness of heaven or suffers from punishment. But such ideas are based upon the scriptural texts, or upon the writings or sayings of some great sages or seers.

The popular belief among the Christians is that the immortality of the soul or immortal life was brought into light by Jesus the Christ,—that before the advent of Jesus the Christ this idea was unknown to the world, and no one can attain eternal life, except through Jesus the Christ. But when we study these ancient pre-Christian religions and their scriptures, we find that this idea of eternal life was almost universally known, and accepted among the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans, Hindus, Zoroastrians, Romans, Greeks, and Scandinavians. In fact, the study of the ancient religions of the world disproves the Christian dogma that Jesus the Christ alone has brought eternal light into life, and that no one can attain heaven except through

him. He might have enlightened the minds of certain Jewish tribes who did not believe in the scriptures or who were in ignorance of them, but as regards bringing this eternal light into life for the first time, we cannot accept it.

Although the vast majority of the followers of different religions believe in an eternal soul, a soul which is immortal and which continues to exist after death, still there is a large number of these scriptural statements. After making independent researches they have come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a soul or that the soul is one with the body, or the result of forces or material particles of the body. They have sufficient strong arguments to support their conclusions. In the same manner the scientists have strong arguments to prove their theories. They have left no stone unturned to discover a satisfactory answer or satisfactory results to this great problem. Fine instruments of all kinds have been invented to capture the secret, or discover that which passes out of the brain at death. The dissected brains of animals, have been most carefully examined, minutely watched, to discover what it is that passes out at the time of death from the human body. But, alas ! all such attempts, all these human efforts have failed. All these human efforts to capture that invisible something—that existence of the visible magnetism of animals in the human

form have failed, and this has driven many seekers after the soul to the conclusions of the agnostics, atheists and materialists. This inability to capture the soul has made many people deny the existence of the soul altogether or its continuance after death or after the dissolution of the gross material form. They cannot believe in anything that is beyond the sense of perception ; no arguments can convince them ; they try to extract intelligence from matter. They say that intelligence, consciousness, and mind are produced by the body, that they have no independent existence, that they last so long as the body lasts, and after the dissolution of the body nothing is left, because they cannot see with their sense power the intelligent soul which passes out of the body. But at the same time no one can prove that matter or the insentient forces of nature have ever produced the consciousness or intelligence.

If we deny the existence of the soul as independent of the body, as something which rules over the body and regulates and directs the organic functions of the body, then we are immediately confronted with the ethical, psychological and philosophical difficulties. The denial of the existence of the soul as independent of the body will destroy the ethical fitness of things as if we were nothing but machines.

If we say that our life passes out like the

snuff of a candle, then why should we struggle for an existence ; why worry through troubles, miseries and sufferings ? What would be the use of living a virtuous life if we do not continue to exist after this gross body is dead and gone ? Why should we not kill everybody,—kill our neighbours and get everything out of them that we can, in order to enrich ourselves ? Posterity will take care of itself. Every individual will be extremely selfish and there will be no standard of morality. If we deny the existence of the soul which lasts after the body is dead and gone, what is the use of building up our character ; what good will it do if all individuals are going to pass away into eternal oblivion ? All the troubles in acquiring an education will be in vain. The love for wife and children, grown up through general self-sacrifice, will be cheated out of its full development. Are we then only playing a long and desperate game with worthless counters if our desires are going to be all for nothing ? Is it possible ? If this be true, each and every one of us ought to commit suicide and get rid of all these sufferings and miseries. We ought to throw all the scriptures into the ocean and demolish all temples and churches, and live like the bests on the sense plane. If our souls are not immortal or if we deny the existence of the soul there would be no reason to live a virtuous life or for training our children up righteously.

This ethical difficulty will never be removed by those who do not admit the existence of the soul as independent of the body. Then again in psychology we will have to face the same difficulty if we deny the existence of the soul. The old materialistic theory that the soul or mind is the result of the functions of the brain, is dead and gone, and is not for sensible people any more.

At the same time if we deny the existence of the soul, we shall not be able to explain this self-consciousness and ever-working functions of the brain which can be translated into the sensible ideas and thoughts, and we shall not be able to explain by what force are they developed into a harmonious whole,—by what force are they brought into the form of memory and what force acts on the brain cells to produce the conscious identity of the individual ego.

We have the sense of sight, the sense of hearing, the sense of touch, etc. Can the vibrations of ether produce any one of these senses? Can any mesmeric force produce the sense of seeing or of hearing? It is simply impossible; it is absolutely absurd. No one has ever seen it. So, if we come to realize this truth, then these and many other psychological difficulties will be removed and clarified.

The self-consciousness has never been produced by the combination of ether or matter

or by electricity. Again, when we analyze this whole material psychologically, what do we gather? The psychological researches lead us to first principles : matter, knowledge and consciousness. The whole universe can be resolved into these three great principles : First, matter ; second, knowledge or force ; third, consciousness. / Of these the matter is immutable or immortal. Psychological researches have also proved that matter has never been created by anybody nor are the forces. Matter is indestructible and noncreatable. In fact, matter, force and consciousness are conserved and they continue to exist. If this conservation of matter and forces be true, we naturally ask why the third principle through which alone the recognition of all are known, is not also conserved? If matter and knowledge are conserved, and if they are uncreated and indestructible, how do you know it? You know it by your consciousness and intelligence. Can you know it by any other force? No; the recognition of matter and force depends upon your own consciousness, and if those two be conserved, how is it that your own consciousness will not be conserved? If matter and knowledge be uncreatable and indestructible, how can you prove that your consciousness is creatable and destructible? Where did you get that knowledge from? How did you know this if you had no consciousness and intelligence?

Here we must not forget that matter and knowledge form only one half of the objective world, and the other half is the subjective world.⁵⁰ If we were all unconscious at this minute the existence of this room would be nothing to us. We know of it only through our consciousness.

You see that the existence of matter and the existence of knowledge must depend upon the consciousness of the individual. If one of them must be conserved, the other must be conserved also. If we analyze the phenomena of the universe and get to the principles that have manufactured this phenomenal universe, we come to the conclusion that both matter and knowledge are conserved, as also intelligence and consciousness; and if they are conserved, your consciousness is also conserved. In order to remove these difficulties, we are bound to admit the existence of the soul independent of the body,—the source of consciousness and intelligence in us, by which we know our own existence and the existence of other things of the universe. The soul cannot be produced by matter. Matter produces nothing but matter. Newton discovered gravitation, but gravitation never discovered Newton. If you believe in the premanency of your own existence, you yourself are, of course, one with the body, then you think of your self as the body.

50. Vide Swâmi Abhedânanda : *Self-knowledge*, pp. 17-18.

But it is very obvious that the body is constantly changing. Then where is that permanency in our bodies? This material form, this gross physical organism will be destroyed. Then where will lie our permanency? Not in the body but in the soul. It is the sense of 'I', that will continue to exist after the body is gone.

Having understood this solution of the problem concerning the existence of the soul, we question : If the soul continues to exist, what will become of it afterwards? What is its destiny? Modern science does not help us in answering the question of destiny of the soul. It is too deep; it is not so easy. We can only guess from the premises upon which the induction can be formed. We get the answer from Vedânta, which is most universal and most unsectarian. It tells us that the soul which produces this gross material form, is separable from the body and can exist independent of the body. It possesses the sense powers, life-force, mind and intellect and the impressions of its physical and mental activities, and this soul manufactures the body through the mediums of parents.

Now a question may arise, if the soul continues to exist after death, does it lose its individuality? We get the answer from Vedânta that it retains its own individuality. The deported soul or spirit can remember where it was, who were its

parents, etc. Modern spiritualism and the result of the psychological researches have given us ample proofs of the individual soul after death. Those who are highly advanced in spiritual life, do not care for their connections with earthly regions, but they rise higher above them. Souls retain their individuality and can go to any realms—can go to the angels, and to heaven. According to Vedânta, there are many heavens—not only one. By heaven we understand the realm of an existence where we go to enjoy the pleasures of life. Those who aspire after the higher spiritual life, will seek higher things. They will go onward and upward until they are one with the infinite Being.

The Christian and the Mohammedan ideas of heavens and hells are the same. Their heavens are the places of eternal happiness and glory for the just and hells the places of eternal punishment for the wicked. But in Vedânta you will find that it is not so. Because Vedânta says that those souls which have desires for earthly things, will have to come down to earth. Some souls will remain earthly bound for a certain length of time, say one hundred or a thousand years. The conditions will vary and those souls which will have earthly desires to be a king, emperor or to have a large fortune, a large family or any other kind of ambition will have to come down on this plane. They will be born again.

So the destiny of the human soul is determined by the thoughts and desires and tendencies. We create our own destiny by our thoughts and desires. What we are today, are the results of our past existence. God is not responsible for our conditions. We ourselves are responsible, and if we understand this secret or mystery of the soul, we can mould our future in such a manner that we will never go down, but rise higher and higher, until we have reached the goal of our existence.

Those who perform good deeds and lead a virtuous life, will come down on the human plane and be born again, until they rise higher in their aspirations and desires, and those that have low tendencies and died in absolute ignorance, will become idiots, subject to suffering and misery, for a certain length of time, until the higher perceptions will be opened to them.⁵¹

So we must try our best to perform good deeds, to build up our characters, to lead a virtuous life, and then we shall enjoy eternal happiness and immortality even in this life.

51. Vide Swâmi Abhedânanda : *Path of Realization*, pp. 173-198.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PRE-EXISTENCE AND REINCARNATION

Different schools of thought about pre-existence and reincarnation—Dr. Thompson—Non-existence cannot produce existence—What is the cause—Leibnitz—Vedānta philosophy on soul—Subtle body—Parents do not create the souls—The believers of one-birth theory—Genesis—Buck and Bethoven—Immortality—Michael Angelo—Memory continues—What is love—Pre-existence and reincarnation go hand in hand

Most mysterious is the government concerning life and death of individuals upon this plane. From the very ancient times, philosophers and thinkers of all countries have tried to unravel this great mystery of nature. Again and again it has been asked, why do people come into existence upon this plane for a short time. Some are born and pass out within a few weeks, a few months, a few years, without having any opportunity to fulfill all the desires they had, as if they are forced by some external power to leave this world unexpectedly before they have completed their desires and their experiences. Why is this? Why do some people come and live for a short time, and others live longer? Are these all accidental? Do the souls come here and pass out without any definite purpose, without being governed by any law? Or, is there a law behind all these appearances? This question rises in our minds, and each individual must solve this problem. Otherwise, he or she cannot remain contented. The mind wants solution, because our tendency

is *to know*. We must know ; we must solve all the problems of life and death.

As we turn towards different classes of thinkers, we find there is a class of thinkers who are known as materialists, scientists, or agnostics. They deny the existence of the the soul as an entity, as an intelligent self-conscious entity, but they try to explain everything through the material forces which are governed by mechanical laws. Some of them have gone so far as to assert that the appearance and disappearance of human beings on this planet are nothing but the results of some fortuitous or accidental combination of matter or disintegration of material particles that are caused by the natural process of the evolution of matter. There is no such thing as soul. There is no such thing as purpose of life. All these are coming accidentally. And these appearances of human bodies or human beings, at the time of death, cease to exist. But this explanation does not satisfy the minds of seekers after truth. The questions are not solved. In the innermost soul of our souls we know that it is wrong, that it is not true, that matter has not produced the intelligence and consciousness. We do not see matter producing intelligence and consciousness. It would be very difficult for any scientist to prove that the combination of matter and material particles, that are governed by mechanical

laws, can produce intelligence or consciousness. On the other hand, it is a scientific truth that motion produces nothing but motion. But the intelligent soul or consciousness is not a motion; neither is it a result of motion, but it is something distinct from motion. It is the knower of motion, the knower of all activities. Motion does not produce the knower, the one who has all power of translating the molecular activities of the brain-cells into sensations, into perceptions, into ideas, desires and thoughts. All these are the living properties of the living soul, that directs the mind. No one has ever proved that brain creates mind or intelligence. But, on the contrary, the greatest thinkers of the world have realized the secret truth concerning the relation between the mind and the brain. For instance, Dr. Thompson, in his book on *Brain and Personality*, explains that brain is only the instrument, and the personality, or the mind, as an intelligent self-conscious entity, is overshadowing the brain. He compared the brain to a violin. He says that a violin cannot produce any music, but the production of music requires a musician. The music is not in the violin, but it is in the mind of the musician. The musician brings music out by playing upon the strings. Violin itself can not do it. Similarly, the personality is like the musician who plays upon the strings of nerves and brain-cells from outside, as it were,

overshadowing it and producing harmony or discord. If the musician is not well trained, well advanced, well developed, instead of bringing out harmony, he creates discord, just as a child when plays upon a violin creates discord instead of producing any real music.

In this way, if we analyze, we see that our soul, the self-conscious entity, the thinker, is not the result of the activity of brain-cells. It is something distinct, something immaterial, yet it has the power to control and govern all the material forces that are under its dominion. If we understand this, if we realize that there is some entity which is our real self, which possesses all the desires, thoughts and ideas, then we shall be eager to know what is that something self-conscious. Where does it exist. How does it produce the physical body and organism? Well, in the first place, if we study nature, we find that the law of causation is inexorable and omnipotent. The law of cause and effect governs everything. Every effect must have a cause. If we deny the law of causation, we not only deny the truth of nature, but we destroy the fundamental principle of modern science—that something cannot come out of nothing. Non-existence cannot produce existence, or existence cannot come out of non-existence. If we exist today, we must have had a cause. That cause is something, not

non-existence. Or in other words, it can be said that we have not come out of nothing. Applying this truth to the phenomena of life and death, we understand that all the appearances of human beings and animals on this mundane plane have definite causes. Having understood this truth, we want to trace the kind of cause that produces all these human activities or activities of an intelligent being. We then enquire : What is the cause that produces all these things in the universe ? Is that cause outside of ourselves, or is it in us ? But it is very difficult problem to solve. A great many scientific thinkers have failed in their attempts to understand this truth, the relation of cause and effect. But a clear understanding of the relation of cause to effect is absolutely necessary for proper solution of any problem that we have to face in this world of experience.

Instead of going into the details of methods by which ultimate scientific truth has been established, let us take it for granted this scientific truth : the cause of a thing is not outside of the thing itself, but it is in the thing. The cause of a tree is not outside of the tree, but in the tree itself. The cause of a human being is not outside of human being, but in the human being. So, we do not have to trace the cause outside of us. In other words, the cause is the unmanifested state of the effect, and the effect is the mani-

fested state of the cause. The whole tree remains in the seed in an invisible state, in a potential form. The environments only give the favourable conditions under which what is latent in the seed becomes actual, becomes real, becomes manifested. The environments do not give any of the powers to the seed that were not already there. The environments simply give the proper conditions. If we understand this clearly, we find that the environments do not create, but the creative power is in the seed itself. And that seed does not manifest the causal state until it has taken the form of the tree. Now apply this truth to human being, to the manifestation. If the cause is in us, then where is that cause? That cause must be something that contains all the peculiarities which a human being can manifest in his lifetime. The cause retains all the potentialities of forces and powers of mind, of thought, of desire, and of intelligence, just as the seed of an oak tree contains all the peculiarities of an oak tree. Those conditions or powers which are latent in the seed of an oak tree, cannot be changed by the environments, but they will become manifested into an oak tree and not in a chestnut tree. This is a real fact. Therefore, the causal state of a human being contains all the peculiarities which a human being will manifest in the future, and that causal state is invisible,

just as we do not see in a seed all the latent tree that is already there. The seed of a banyan tree, for instance, is as small as a mustard seed, and if it is given to you, you would not know what it is, but it contains a gigantic banyan tree that will cover the area of a mile in circumference and which will produce, perhaps, seventy-five or a hundred trunks of one tree. There is such a tree in the Boatanical Garden near Calcutta. One tree covers an area of a mile and has seventy-five trunks. It shoots the roots which afterwards grow into trunks of the tree. That giantic tree, which would last for thousands of years, like one of the big trees here in Mariposa Grove, is contained in that seed. No other seed will produce that. All the peculiarities of a banyan tree are in that seed. Similarly, the invisible germ, which you may call an amoeba or bioplasm or protoplasm, which will afterwards appear as a human being, contains all the potentialities of that human being in the invisible state. If we deny this, then we run the risk of committing the blunder that something has 'come out of nothing. But the scientific truth is, as understood by scientists, that whatever exists in the end, existed also in the beginning. If in the end we find a human being like Abraham Lincoln, or Shakespeare, or Plato, then the germ, or the seed form which has manufactured that particular manifestation, contained all those powers

in an invisible state. That is the germ. You may call it a germ, or you may call it by any other name. Names do not make much differences. Leibnitz called it Monad. Scientists call it germ of life. The Vedanta philosophy calls it the subtle body. The subtle body is the invisible germ, the nucleus which contains mind, intelligence, reasoning, the power of thinking, will-power, and all the senses, that is, the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching, and so forth. All these powers are in the subtle body, and it also contains the impressions of previous manifestations. That is, all the impressions are embedded in that body. The subtle body is composed of etherial and minute particles of matter that are held together by a force which is called life-force or vital energy.

This subtle body or being is the real man. It appears in the form of a human body, which it manufactures and lives in. Just as an oyster or a carb would manufacture a shell as a dwelling-house, so the germ of life or the subtle body of the individual, whether it is human or an animal, takes only the form according to its desires, according to its tendencies. The human will manufacture a human body, and if this will be of any particular animal form, it manufactures that form. It has no particular form, but it can take any form. This subtle body contains everything. So, we do not gain any-

thing from outside. It is already within us. It has infinite potentialities and infinite possibilities. At the time of death, the individual contracts all its forces, all its powers, and all these are centralized into a nucleus, and that nucleus already retains the life, the mind, the powers of senses, and all the impressions and experiences, that the individual has gathered. Then, in the course of time, when the favourable conditions come, it manufactures another form. Parents are nothing but the principal channels through which these germs of life or subtle bodies find their proper conditions to manufacture a human being by obeying the laws of nature. Parents do not create the soul. In fact, the parents cannot give birth to a child according to their will. It would be an absolute impossibility. Unless the soul comes to them and nourishes the germ, it would be an absolute impossibility. These subtle bodies are like water globules. As a water globule may remain in the form of water in the ocean, or it may go up and become invisible in a vapoury state in a cloud and then come down again in the form of a drop of rain. Then it may remain again in mud, or it may be frozen into a solid substance which you can handle in the form of a piece of ice. But it is never destroyed. It may become invisible or visible. These conditions do not change the globule of water. It is there. And this globule of water of the subtle body

arose in the beginningless past in the ocean of eternal life, and it retains reflection of the supreme spirit in the form of intelligence. It may appear on this earth, or it may go to another planet. It has the power to travel with the speed of light, and it can follow the way of light from one planet to another with the vibration or the waves of ether. It can shoot out instantaneously. It has such a power. And this subtle body may remain on this plane in the human form. Then, after the death, it might go to heaven or to some other planet, or remain in an invisible state until the proper conditions of the environments are found. Then they gravitate; they gravitate according to their desires. This whole process is governed by a law. This law is called the law of reincarnation, or remanifestation of the subtle form into the gross physical form. This law is inexorable. No matter what we want to do, or whether we admit its existence or not, this law is working, just the same. The same forces which have brought us here this time, will bring us here again. Who can stop it? Your will or my will would not stop it until we understand this law and outgrow it, go beyond it. So you may think that we deny it, we do not want to believe such stuff. Well, the ignorant fool may say that we do not believe in gravitation and deny its existence, but still his whole being is held up by the force of

gravity. He could not live without it. The molecules of his body would fly asunder if there were no force of gravity to hold it together. He could not live on the surface of the earth, if he were not held down by the force of gravity. Still, he can deny it. His denial amounts to nothing, and simply betrays his own ignorance, that he does not understand the law. The same way, anyone who denies reincarnation, betrays his own ignorance, because he does not know the law.

Those who do not believe in reincarnation, believe in the one-birth theory. They believe that the souls of the individuals have been created out of nothing for the first time, and some of them tell us that they will continue to exist for ever. Now, how is it possible that anything that has a beginning at one end, will continue to exist for ever at the other? It is absurd. It is an absolute impossibility. Anything that has a beginning, must have an end. If you believe that the individual souls that have been created out of nothing for the first time, will continue to live for ever, then you have to admit that these souls were not created out of nothing, but they existed before. In Genesis, you read in the first chapter that God created man after His own image. In the second chapter you read that God made man out of dust of the earth and blew the breath of life into his nostrils. There are the two statements about it. There were two stories

which were prevalent amongst the Phœnicians of ancient times, and the ancient Jews and the writer of Genesis accepted those two stories and put them together in the chapters. The ideas of the two stories are again radically opposed. Which will you accept? If God created man after his own image, how did He create him? Well, the second said, out of the dust of the earth man was created. But earth is material and insentient matter. And, therefore, it does not explain how the breath of life came into existence from insentient matter. All these difficulties that arise in our minds after studying these statements, cannot be solved in any other way unless we accept the idea that spirit or intelligence or consciousness was never created, but the body was created or manufactured through the process of gradual evolution. As the breath of life was never created, so the mind was never created, the soul was never created out of matter. The soul retains the image of the Lord or the image of the Spirit. In other words, Vedânta explains that soul contains the reflection of the supreme spirit that is all-intelligence. We cannot explain anything by the theory of one birth or creation of the soul out of nothing, because, if God creates the soul out of nothing, why does He make so many varieties of characters? Some are born to enjoy and to show their genius, their wonderful

talents. Others are kept to manifest nothing but ignorance. Others are kept in weaknesses. Therefore how can you explain those things? A person may have five children. One might be a murderer, another might be a genius, another might be an artist, and so on. What makes all these inequalities and diversities? If God creates each one separately at the time of birth of the body, who is to be held responsible? Not the parents, but God himself. Why could not He do better? That question must rise in our minds, and we must try to find the solution.

Then another question rises: Why do children come into life to live only for a short time, for a few days or weeks? Why do they pass away without gaining any opportunity to learn anything or gain experience in this vast world of phenomena? Who is responsible and what becomes of those children? Well, there might be a theory that they would go to heaven and enjoy eternal life. Those who could believe in that story—it is better to pray for the death of their children before they commit any more harm, and thank the Lord that their little bodies are covered by the grave. I would do that if I had little children and believed in such a thing. Why should they go through all these miseries and troubles? If we could go to heaven straight by dying in childhood, we would rather die than live. So, this theory does not explain

anything, but makes it appear to us as absurd and irrational. If you admit the theory by predestination and grace, that also does not help us very much. If we are predestined and pre-ordained to do these things, if a murderer is pre-ordained to murder somebody and before he had any, will it was all arranged by the Creator, why should we hang the murderer? We should hang the Creator, because He is responsible for that. Therefore we cannot find any solution.

There is another creed of heredity. Does heredity explain all these inequalities and diversities? No, it cannot. How can heredity explain the cases of prodigies and geniuses? Take the case of the young Polish boy, who is a great chess player. He is only eight years old. He is now in New York, I think. He began to play chess when he was five years old, and has beaten all the greatest experts and champions of London and Paris, after playing thirtythree games at a time and defeating them all. What mind power does he possess? He has brothers and sisters. They are not uncommon. Neither are the parents in any way uncommon. He is the only one. How can heredity explain that? Take the case of Goethe, the great German poet. He was octogenarian poet and philosopher. When he was ten, he was master of Greek and sixteen other languages. There is a Frenchman in Columbia who knows more that

a dozen languages. He knows more than his teacher can teach him. The theory of heredity cannot explain these cases of prodigies and geniuses. But there is another theory that would explain them. Whatever a person has manifested in this life, he had it at the time of his birth, from the very beginning; that is, he gained that power in his previous life. So any talent or genius is only the expression of all that was developed in that particular soul. I saw a girl six years old, in New York City. She could play the piano, Bach and Bethoven and all the difficult music, with such an ease and such a perfection that you would be surprised. She could hardly span the octave, and yet she was playing this rapid music and with most wonderful expression. Her mother was with her, and she was not a musician. Her father was never a musician. How do you explain that? Heredity cannot explain. But we can explain that easily. Because this child was a musician. The soul of this child was a musician in her previous incarnation, and now she has manufactured another form with a little brain. The brain is not developed enough to understand such music, but the musician is overshadowing the brain and manipulating all these strings of brain and nerve cells and producing all this wonderful music. There is the only rational explanation.

If we deny the pre-existence of the soul,

we cannot explain immortality. Immortality does not mean it has a beginning at one end and endless existence at the other. Pre-existence explains the continuity of life in the past and immortality explains the continuity of life in the future. It is an eternal life. You cannot accept one-half and deny the other half, because each would be incomplete. So, the complete soul life means eternal past and eternal future. The soul was never born, never created out of nothing. It is the grandest theory, and it is satisfying. It is comforting that we have not come into existence out of nothing, but we have everything in the beginning. If we are the images of God, then we possess all the powers. And God was not a substance that came into existence suddenly like a mushroom, but He is eternal, and naturally our life, soul-life, must be as eternal as God's life. In fact, we are parts and parcels of God. In this way, if we understand how great and grand beautiful we are, we do not have to accept any such idea that after death we will discontinue to live. But on the contrary, we can say that so long as we have desires and those desires that are to be fulfilled on the human plane under our present conditions, we will come back to this plane. If our desires change, we will go to other planes. For instance, if I have a desire to become an artist like Michael Angelo, and if I in this life cannot become a Michael Angelo

and still possess the desire in my soul, do you think that desire will have no fulfilment, no manifestation? Nothing will stop the fulfilment of that desire, because that desire will bring me back to the proper environments and other conditions where I will gravitate and then start from my childhood with a tendency to become an artist. Nothing can stop me. I will continue so long as that desire is strong. I will continue until I become a master artist. That is the law of nature. So, whatever desire we possess, if that desire be strong, then that desire will mould our future, create our destiny, and make us accordingly. This idea has been given in the *Bhagavad Gita* :

‘Whatsoever desire is very strong during the lifetime, becomes predominant at the time of death, and that desire moulds the creation of the subtle body of the individual and that determines the future of the individual.’⁵²

So, it gives us an opportunity to find out what we shall be in future. We shall make our future by our thoughts, by our deeds and desires. If you desire to be a great politician, you will be a great politician. If you desire to be a great saviour, you will be a great saviour. If you desire to be a great artist, you will be a great artist. Because you live in eternity. Do not despair. If you cannot be a great artist in this life, there are hundreds of lives coming

52. “*Yam yam vāpi smaran bhāvam tyajatyante kalevaram ; ta tamevaiti Kaunteya sadā tad bhāvabhdvīta.*”—*Bhagavad Gītā*, Ch., VII, 6.

to you, till you get that desire. When one set of desires is fulfilled, another will spring up. As each individual soul possesses infinite potentialities and possibilities, so it can express an infinite variety of manifestations. We are all eternal and all parts of the Infinite.

The idea of pre-existence of the soul and reincarnation has settled many questions and solved the problems of life and death amongst the ancient philosophers like Plato, Pythagoras and the Neo-Platonists; among the poets, like Wordsworth, Tennyson, Walt Whitman and others. Walt Whitman said :

‘As to you, Life, I reckon you are the leavings
of many death,
No doubt I have died myself ten thousand
times before.’

He learnt that through the study of Vedânta, just as Emerson learnt the belief in reincarnation from the study of Vedânta, the Hindu philosophy. Because, there is not other philosophy which manifests this idea so strong as Vedânta does. Of course, Plato and others got their ideas from India, Persia, and Egypt. The Hindus understood the secret of this law of pre-existence and reincarnation even at the dawn of human civilization on the earth. That idea spread among the early Christians until the time of Justinian, who anathematized all those who believed in this idea, in the Council of Constantinople in 538 A.D. He said :

‘Whoever believes in this wonderful doctrine of pre-existence of the soul, let him be anathema.’

And the churches from that time have not accepted, although it is in the Old Testament and the New Testament. It does not preserve their scheme of salvation. But outside of orthodox people, there are millions of people in the world who find comfort, like the Buddhists, Japanese, Hindus, and poets and thinkers of all countries.

Therefore, the theory of reincarnation is the rational solution. It explains all the causes of inequalities and diversities and the appearance of the prodigies. Heredity or the theory of one birth as explained by the orthodox theologians, does not explain or does not solve the problem of life. Now you may have noticed that there are persons who cannot accept this theory of pre-existence and reincarnation, because they existed before. Why do remember what you did in your childhood? Would you say you did not exist then, because you cannot remember? Certainly not. What you did when you were a child. All the existence you have gone through,—the details have passed out of your memory, but the knowledge you have gathered through those experiences, is part and parcel of your being. That has shaped you as you are. Memory is of short duration, and it is sometimes powerful and sometimes very weak.

But modern spiritualism has thrown a different light on this subject. It says that the souls that have passed out, remember

their relatives, remember the conditions under which they passed. So the memory continues. Take the case of Raymond, the son of Sir Oliver Lodge. He remembers everything, how he died and so on, and he communicates to his father and mother and tells them. So, it shows that we retain our memory all the time. But the instrument, the brain and the nervous system, are destroyed. Therefore, it is true that memory is not the product of the function of the brain, but it is a power of the mind which we retain so long as there would be the mind. However, the memory is not so important. But this is not true, because if we do remember our past, we might make bad use of our present. So it is not desirable. Suppose somebody knows or understands his past and knows that he has committed wicked deeds and he is going to suffer for it, and so he would be constantly thinking of that. He would lose all these opportunities and make a bad use of his present. He would not be able to do any work properly. He would be worrying about how to avoid the misfortune that is coming. He would not be able to sleep even, or eat a good meal. Therefore, Vedânta philosophy tells us : Do not think of the past, but try to mould your present so that you can make your future better. Of course, there is a method by which we can remember our past. Because all the experiences that we have gained during our

lifetime, are stored up in our subliminal self, in our subconscious mind where all the impressions are pigeon-holed. We can bring them out if we focus our intelligence upon any particular branch of the experience which we like to remember.

Now, there are cases again, like two lovers who fall in love at the first sight. There we can explain that these souls loved before and naturally they remember that, and feel as if they had met each other. And what is love? Love does not mean any passion. It means the attraction of two souls. It is not on the physical plane. It must be on the soul-plane, because love is God. It is the divine force, the divine attraction of two souls. If there be a pure love between any man and woman, that pure love will continue to hold them together even after death of the body, because the body cannot interfere. But at the same time we must remember that love must be mutual. If the husband loves the wife and the wife loves the husband truly unselfishly, then that love is mutual. But if you love somebody and that somebody loves somebody else, there would be no meeting again until both were attracted to each other. Therefore it is necessary to develop that kind of love which would be mutual, and then that love will hold the lover and beloved together throughout eternity. There is no separation. So, you

need not be affraid of being separated from your beloved. Because if your beloved be born again, after you go from this plane, you will be born again and you will come together unexpectedly and enjoy the beautiful effects of pure and divine love.

Therefore, if we study this carefully, we see that pre-existence and reincarnation go hand in hand. They explain all the difficulties and all the problems of life and death and existence, and also that we are the creators of our own destiny. Our present life is the resultant of our present. Whether we remember or not, that does not make any difference. We are subject to this eternal law. But there are souls who can remember. If we rise on the height of our spiritual consciousness, from that height we can see our past and future, just as if it were eternally present.⁵³

So anyone who reaches that state of super-consciousness, develops a sight. By developing that sight, one can see the past and future and remember all the experiences that one has gone through and all the experiences, that one will go through. And when he understands that life is eternal, he does not worry about the conditions, the failures and successes, or diseases or sufferings of this earthly plane. This life on this mundane plane is only for a short time, but from the stand-

53. *Bhagavad Gita* Ch. IV, 5.

point of eternal life, we are never born, we are never going to die. In truth, we are birthless, deathless, eternal, immortal, and part and parcel of the infinite spirit which is worshipped under different names and forms among different races.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PRE-EXISTENCE AND IMMORTALITY

Immortality is one of the fundamental principles of the philosophy and religion of Vedânta—The orthodox view of the Christian theologians—Conception of immortality in Vedânta differs from that of Christianity—The laws of nature—Pre-existence of the soul—True immortality according to Vedânta—Râja Yoga and pre-existence—The subconscious mind is the storehouse of all the impressions—Dormant impressions mould our characters—Persons who are born with some wonderful powers—The word *love*—Vedânta and immortality—Modern Spiritualism—Rebirth and reincarnation of the soul—Reward and punishment of the soul after death depend upon its thoughts and deeds—Vedânta and heaven.

One of the fundamental principles of philosophy and religion of Vedânta is the immortality of the human soul. According to the teachings of Vedânta, each individual soul is immortal by nature. However sinful it may appear to be from the moral standpoint, it will continue to exist after death of the body. It cannot be annihilated or destroyed into nothingness. It can never cease to exist.

On this point the religion of Vedânta differs from the dogmas of those dualistic religions which maintain that immortal life can be obtained only by a few chosen ones as a special gift of God while others will perish. Many of the orthodox Christian theologians hold that the soul's continued life after death in eternal future, is not a natural gift but a special gift, being conditioned upon the proper use of this life. They think that immortality is a reward of merit, or of good works, or of an

ethical life or faith in the Christ. Here we may ask, who will decide how many degress above zero one must be, morally, in order to obtain the gift of immortality ?

If we examine minutely we shall find that this dogma of conditional immortality is not based upon a rational foundation. It makes God, the merciful Father, partial and unjust. How can we imagine that a just, impartial and merciful Father will grant immortality to some of His children and allow the rest to perish, simply on account of their immoral acts or mistakes ? The religion of Vedânta does not teach this dogma of conditional immortality, but, on the contrary, it says that immortal life cannot be a reward or a gift of any superior being, because that reward or punishment is nothing but the result or reaction of our own actions ; and since every human action is finite or limited by time and space, and consequently non-eternal, it cannot produce an eternal effect in the form of immortal life. No human action, either of the mind or of the body, however good or virtuous, it may be called, can produce an eternal effect, that is, an effect unlimited by time or by space. It will then be against the law of cause and sequence, which makes every effect or result similar to its cause, both in nature and quality.

There is another important point on which the conception of immortality in Vedânta

differs from that of Christianity. Christianity, believing in the theory of special creation of the individual soul at the time of birth, denies the pre-existence of the human soul previous to the birth of the body ; yet it admits the continuity of the soul after death in an eternal future. This doctrine again is not based upon a rational foundation, nor is it supported by any fact of nature, because it is impossible for a thing which has a beginning in time to last for ever. No one has ever seen or heard of any substance which began to exist at a certain time but continued for ever in future. Can we imagine a stick, the one end of which is in our hand and the other end is endless, unlimited ? No, it is impossible. We cannot think of a thing which has a beginning or a limit either in time or in space, on one side, and on the other side, is unlimited by either time or space. As we cannot imagine any earthly object, or material thing, of such a nature, how can we imagine that the soul, which had its birth in time and space, will continue to exist for ever ? We cannot conceive of a soul which came into existence at the time of birth and will remain for ever after death in eternal future or endless time. Therefore, immortality, which means the eternal continuity of existence, presupposes the existence of the soul previous to the birth of the body. If we believe in the immortality of the human soul, we shall have to admit its pre-

existence also, because that which is born, must die, and everything that has a beginning, must have an end. This is the law of nature. We cannot go against it.

The laws of nature are always uniform and universal. There is no such thing as an exception. All exceptions are governed by other laws which we may or may not know. They are only the expressions of different laws. Anything that is born, must be subject to death, and that which has a beginning must have an end. If we wish to be endless or immortal in future we must have to admit that we were beginningless or immortal in the past. Here some people may think how is it possible that we existed in the past? If you apply that law, that because we exist today we could not come into existence out of nothing, then you will get a glimpse of the idea of pre-existence. And for this reason Vedânta teaches both immortality and pre-existence. No theory of immortality can be perfect or complete without admitting the pre-existence of the soul. No theory has successfully proved the necessity of an eternal future life in the case of one whose existence in the past, has been proved to be unnecessary. If you say that your pre-existence was unnecessary, so your immortal life will be equally unnecessary. If the world could get along without you before, why should it not get along without you hereafter? What necessity will there be for an immortal life

in future if you did not exist before? If you have come into existence all on a sudden, you can go out of existence all on a sudden. Who will prevent us from becoming such an ephemeral substance?

In Vedânta, true immortality means eternal existence in the past as well as in the future. Pre-existence and immortality are so closely related to each other; if we deny one we cannot accept the other. For logically, we shall be incorrect; we shall go against the laws of nature and our statement will be founded, not upon rational ground, but upon some dogma or doctrine which has no foundation. In Vedânta, therefore, we learn that each individual soul existed before the birth of the body. If we believe that we shall continue to exist after death, we shall have to admit that we existed in the past, otherwise, we cannot have immortal life in future. We have not come into existence for the first time out of nothing, but our present is a connecting link in the chain of our past and future existence. We may not know it, we may not possess the memory of our past lives; still we existed just the same.

Here it may be asked, if we existed before our birth why do we not remember? This is one of the strongest objections often raised against the belief in pre-existence. Some people deny the existence of the soul in the past simply because they cannot remember

the events of the past. Others again, who hold memory as the standard of existence say, if our memory of the present ceases to exist at the time of death, with it we shall also cease to be; we cannot be immortal. Because they hold that memory is the standard of life, and if we do not remember, why then we are not the same beings?

Vedânta answers these questions by saying that it is possible for us to remember our previous existences. Those who have read Râja Yoga, will recall the Aphorism :

{ 'By perceiving the *Samskâras* one acquires the knowledge of past lives.'⁵⁴

Here the *Samskâras* mean the impressions of the past experience which lie dormant in our subliminal self, and are never lost. Memory is nothing but the awakening and rising of latent impressions above the threshold of consciousness. A Râja Yogî, through powerful concentration upon these dormant impressions of the subconscious mind, can remember all the events of his past lives. There have been many instances in India of the Yogîs who could know not only their own past lives, but correctly tell those of others also. It is said that Buddha remembered five hundred of his previous births. Srî Krishna says, in the *Bhagavad Gita* :

54. *Samskara-sâksâtâkâranât*
darsanam, 3.18.

purvajâtijñānam."—Pātanjala-

'Both thou and I, Arjuna, have gone through many births ; thou knowest them not ; but I know them all.'⁵⁵

This shows that Srî Krishna remembered them, because he was a Yogî ; and Arjuna could not remember because he had not the power to do so.

Our subliminal self, or the subconscious mind is the storehouse of all the impressions that we gather through experiences during our lifetime. They are stored up, pigeon-holed there, in the *chitta*, as it is called in Vedânta. *Chitta* means the same subconscious mind or subliminal self which is the storehouse of all impressions and experiences. And these impressions remain latent until favourable conditions rouse them and bring them out in the level of consciousness. Here let us take an illustration : In a dark room, pictures are thrown on a screen by lantern-slides. The room is absolutely dark. We are looking at the picture. Suppose we open a window and allow the rays of the midday sun to fall upon the screen. Would we be able to see those pictures ? No. Because the more powerful flood of light will subdue the light of the lantern and the pictures. But although they are invisible to our eyes we cannot deny their existence on the screen. Similarly, the pictures of the events of our previous lives upon the screen of the subliminal self may be invisible

55. "Yahni me vyatitâni janmâni tava chârjuna ; tanyaham veda sarvâni na tvam vetthya parantapa."—Bhagavad Gitâ, Ch. IV, 5.

to us at present, but they exist there. Why are they invisible to us now? Because the more powerful light of sense-consciousness has subdued them. If we close the windows and door of our senses from outside contact and darken the inner chamber of our self, then by focussing the light of consciousness and concentrating the mental rays we shall be able to know and remember our past lives, and all the events and experiences thereof. Those who wish, therefore, to develop their memory and remember their past, should practise Râja Yoga and learn the method of acquiring the power of concentration by shutting the doors and windows of their senses. And that power of concentration must be helped by the power of self-control, *i.e.*, by controlling the doors and windows of our own senses.

The dormant impressions, whether we remember them or not, are the chief factors in moulding our individual characters with which we are born. They are the causes of inequalities and diversities that we find around us. When we study the characters and powers of geniuses and prodigies we cannot deny the pre-existence of the soul. Whatever the soul has mastered in a previous life, manifests in the present. If we possess wisdom and knowledge which we gathered in our previous lives, it matters very little whether or not we remember the particular events, or the struggles which we went through

in order to gain that knowledge. Those particular things may not come to us in our memory, but we have not lost the wisdom. Now, study your own present life and you will see that in this life you have gained some experience. The particular events and the struggles which you went through are passing out of your memory, but the experience, the knowledge which you have gained through that experience, has moulded your character, has shaped you in a different manner. You will not have to go through those different events again to remember ; how you acquired that experience is not necessary ; the wisdom gained is quite enough.

Then, again, we find among ourselves persons who are born with some wonderful powers. Take, for instance, the power of self-control. One is born with the power of self-control highly developed, and that self-control may not be acquired by another after years of hard struggle. Why is there this difference ? Bhagavân Srî Râmakrishna was born with Godconsciousness, and he went into the highest state of *Samadhi** when he was four years old. But this state is very difficult for other Yogîs to acquire. There was a Yogî who came to see Srî Râmkrishna. He was an old man and possessed wonderful powers. But he said one day : 'I have struggled for forty years to acquire that state which is natural with you.' Sankarâchârya, the great

commentator of Vedânta philosophy, wrote his commentary when he was twelve years of age, and there are very few thinkers and philosophers in the world who can understand the spirit of his writings. They are so deep and so sublime that ordinary minds cannot grasp them. There are many such instances which show that pre-existence is a fact, and that these latent or dormant impressions of previous lives are the chief factors in moulding the individual character without depending upon the memory of the past. Because we cannot remember our past, because of the loss of memory of the particular events, the soul's progress is not arrested. The soul will continue to progress further and further, even though the memory may be weak.

Each individual soul possesses this storehouse of previous experiences in the background, in the subconscious mind. Take the instance of two lovers. What is love? It is the attraction between two souls. This love does not die with the death of the body. True love survives death and continues to grow, to become stronger and stronger. Eventually it brings the two souls together and makes them one. The theory of pre-existence alone can explain why two souls at the first sight know each other and become attached to each other by the tie of friendship. This mutual love will continue to grow and will become stronger, and in the end will bring these

lovers together, no matter where they go. Therefore, Vedânta does not say that the death of the body will end the attraction or the attachment of two souls. But as the souls are immortal, so their relation will continue for ever. But we must not forget here that relation and love must be mutual. If you love some one and that person does not love you, then it will be onesided. It will not bring the two souls together. There must be mutual attraction. In Vedânta we learn that as immortality means the continued existence in eternal future, so pre-existence means the continued existence in the eternal past. The one cannot exist without the other. And each of these only expresses the one half of our soul-life, which is eternal, and both of these together make a complete whole. That is the eternal soul-life. It existed before, and it was always unborn, and, therefore, it will continue to exist in future for ever. Our present life is the resultant of the past, and our future will be the resultant of the present. Nothing will be lost.

Modern spiritualism has thrown a little light upon the future, that even the departed spirits do remember their past relations. This shows that memory does not depend entirely upon the physical organism, but memory goes with the soul wherever the soul goes. That is the real memory. The physical organism may be destroyed. It is only through

which the subliminal self is reproducing powers which are latent in it. So our present life is the resultant of the past. It contains all the previous impressions and experiences of past lives ; only under certain conditions they can be remembered. But here we must remember that immortality does not necessarily imply that we should go to heaven to enjoy eternally the celestial pleasures, or to go to eternal perdition in order to suffer punishments on account of our evil deeds. These ideas are not necessarily included in the meaning of immortality. According to Vedânta, immortality includes the meaning of progress, growth and evolution of the soul from lower to higher stages of development. It also includes the idea that each individual soul will manifest the powers which are already latent in the soul by going through different states of growth and development until perfection and omniscience and omnipresence are acquired. In order to attain to this, in order to accomplish this highest end, the soul must manifest itself in various stages of life and gain experience after experience. That cause which brought us on the plane of existence, will continue to bring us here again in future. If the same cause remains in us, even after the death of the body, then nothing can prevent us from coming back to his plane of existence in order to fulfil our desires and purposes. This idea leads to the theory of

rebirth and reincarnation of the individual soul. The rebirth and reincarnation of the individual soul is based upon the truth of the eternality of the soul-life which is expressed by pre-existence and immortality. The exodus of the soul after death into heaven or into some realm of punishment or lower realm depends entirely upon the thoughts and deeds of the individual soul, and the soul's stay in these realms is temporary, dependent upon the condition of reaping the results, of those thoughts and deeds. That is, the soul will remain there as long as it has not thoroughly reaped the fruits of its thoughts and deeds. At the expiration of that time the inmates of heavens and other realms will come back on this plane in order to gain further experience, to gain more power, more knowledge, until perfection is reached. Vedânta does not say that heaven is eternal, but the soul has the power to transcend heaven and go beyond all celestial realms. Why should we be limited to one particular spot? If we do not care to return to this realm, we shall be dissatisfied even when we have gone to heaven. Then will come the time when we shall try to go further beyond until we have become absolutely perfect and omniscient and omnipresent. Therefore it is said in Vedânta :

'Even the highest heaven is temporary and non-eternal. The realms that exist between the earth and the highest heaven mark only the phenomenal growth and progress of the individual souls. Those who go

there and remain there are subject to birth and rebirth. They will come back again. But those who have attained to perfection, transcend all heavens, understand eternal life and remain perfect forever and ever.⁵⁶

56. Cf. *Bhagavad Gītā*, Ch. VIII, 16-27.

CHAPTER NINE

SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY

The popular belief in Christendom—The ancient records in Egypt—The belief among the pious Christians—Jesus the Christ did not bring the idea of immortality to the world for the first time—Zend Avesta and immortality—What is death—Science and death—Christian theologians and death—The meaning of *immortality*—Physical bodies are subject to change—Everything is in vibration—Analyzation of the conception of pleasure—What lies in the gross description of hell and heaven—What is *personality*—A finite cause can never produce an infinite result—God cannot change the laws—The law of *Karma*—There is one universal law—The materialists—Modern scientists—What is soul—Christian Scientists—The knower and the changing states of consciousness—The books will not reveal the Truth—Rāja Yoga and concentration—What the scriptures of the Hindus say.

The popular belief in Christendom is that Jesus the Christ brought eternal life and immortality to light, and that immortality cannot be obtained except through him, as if this conception of eternal life, or eternal life after death, which is understood by immortality, did not exist before the advent of the illustrious Son of Man. But the students of comparative religions find that in ancient times, long before the Christian era, this same conception of eternal life, of immortal life, existed among the ancient nations such as the Egyptians, Chaldeans, Hindus, and other different branches of the Aryan nation, such as Zoroastrians, the ancient Greeks, Roman, Scandinavians and so on.

If we study the most ancient records of Egypt, which go back between 12000 and 8000 B. C., we shall find in those earliest records that the ancient Egyptians had a

belief in the resurrection of the body, and eternal life for those who were righteous. The crude idea of the resurrection of the body was afterwards rejected by the priests and and speculator in Egypt, when the idea of a *double* or soul, as independent of the gross material body, developed. But the ignorant masses kept up the belief in the resurrection of the material or corruptible body, just as we find today it is upheld by the majority of believers in orthodox Christianity. The ignorant classes cannot believe that the soul can be separated from the body, and can live without the body. Body clings to body. Attachment to the gross material form is so great, that we cannot think for a moment that we can do without the body, or exist without this material form, which we have clothed with so much care, and which we have kept up with beautiful things, and nice dishes, and so on.

Among the writings of the old Egyptians, who lived in the fifth dynasty, that is, in 400 B. C., we find such expressions as,

'The soul to heaven, the body to earth ;
The heaven hath thy soul, the earth thy body.'

You will have to remember that 3500 years before the birth of Christ such expressions were uttered, and written down, by the thinkers in Egypt, and these ancient Egyptians believed that the souls of the righteous would go to heaven, enjoy celestial pleasures, would eat

and drink ; because they would have a light, active, etherial body, and, therefore, they needed food and drink. That was their conception, and it was for that reason the relatives and friends of the deceased used to put food in the grave. Sometimes they would place amulets, and other charms in the graves, believing that the departed ones might need such things to protect themselves against the evil influences. Again in some other writings we find that the souls of the deceased would go to heaven, and they were apparently in white linen. They wore white sandals on their feet, they walked in the fields of peace, sat with gods, and ate the food of light. There were canals, water courses roads,, boats, chariots, horses, and the duplicates of all these things which we find on this plane, in heaven, and the enjoyment of all these pleasures and comforts lasting throughout eternity, was the meaning of immortality, according to these ancient Egyptians. They believed that the souls of these departed ones would go to heaven, and enjoy all these celestial pleasures. The highest ideals of pleasures we can enjoy on this plane which were eternal, and the enjoyment of these pleasures throughout eternity was the meaning they gave to immortality. We must remember that by 'eternity' we do not mean a million or a million thousand years, but 'a time without end'. Can you grasp the meaning of eternity, a time without end,

enjoying these pleasures? A similar belief we find among the ancient Greeks in the Elysian fields. That is, the righteous ones, who went to the Elysian fields, would continue to enjoy celestial pleasures throughout eternity. Each of the deceased ones would resume the pleasures, the occupations, in which they delighted during their earthly career. And such a belief prevails among Swedenborgians, and other churches, even to this day. Not long ago a clergyman of the City of New York wrote an article in a newspaper, in which he said :

‘The activities of our beings on this earth, will be the activities of our beings in heaven. We cannot change this ; it cannot be changed, but we must find, look for such occupations. In whatever form of existence we can conceive of the occupations of life must shadow and type the occupations of heaven, and in nobler and in higher forms we must go on doing what we are doing today on this earth.’

If this remark be true, I would like to know how many of our cooks, waitresses, lawyers, bell-boys and street cleaners would like to continue the same work throughout eternity, without having an end of time ! I would like to know how many would like to go on doing them?

Among the pious Christians we find the belief that the enjoyments of heaven, and the conception of eternal life is connected with a belief that the everlasting playing upon a harp would be the principal occupation in heaven. There is a hymn which used to be

sung in the churches which gives a description of the heavenly enjoyments where the Sabbaths never end.

We have already mentioned that before the time of Christ there was a belief in eternal life among the Chaldeans, Egyptians and Greeks. Among the Chinese, among the Hindus, among the Zoroastrians, we find a similar belief in eternal life and celestial pleasures in heaven. So when we examine the dogma of the Christian theologians that Jesus the Christ brought for the first time life, and immortal life, we stop and ask the question whether it is true, or not? Jesus the Christ might have enlightened certain tribes among the Jews, who did not believe in a life hereafter, or the life after death, but he did not bring that idea to the world for the first time, and even the crude idea of resurrection after death, which prevailed among the Jews at the time of Christ, was taken from the Parsees during the Babylonian Captivity (586-536 B.C.). If we read the Zend Avesta, we shall find that each individual, howsoever good, or howsoever wicked he may be, must resurrect on the third day after death, and then must go to heaven or to some place of punishment. That idea prevailed among the Jews. The Pharisees accepted it; the Sadducees rejected it, and the other class of orthodox Jews repudiated it.

So this belief, we find, by studying the

other religions of the world, was not introduced for the first time by Jesus the Christ. Though the idea of immortality has come to mean the eternal life in heaven, yet the question of immortality is a very difficult problem. Most of the thinkers and metaphysicians of the world have tried to solve this problem of immortality. Some of them have arrived at certain conclusions, which are either for or against the existence of eternal life after death. But if we analyze the meaning of the word immortality, we know that it means deathlessness; that is, that state which is not subject to death. Then comes the question: What is Death? If by death we mean destruction, annihilation, absolute dissolution into nothingness, then there is no one in this universe who is subject to such a death or annihilation. Science has proved that matter is indestructible; force is indestructible, so every particle of matter, however minute or gross it may be, is not subject to absolute destruction, or death; so that in that sense we must say that matter is immortal, force is immortal, energy is immortal, because it is not subject to either destruction or annihilation. The old gross conception of death is that it is a kind of sleep. The spirit or soul goes into unconsciousness at the time of death, and in that slumber of unconsciousness the soul remains until the morning of resurrection, when it is again combined with the body, both

body and soul go to heaven or to hell, awaiting the judgment of the merciful Father. Death was regarded by the Christian theologians as the greatest enemy of mortals. It means the doom of the soul throughout all eternity. The good soul remains good for ever ; the wicked will suffer throughout all eternity. This dreary conception of death still prevails among a certain class of Christian believers, and the horror and despair also permeate the atmosphere of the sacred shrines under the vaults of holy places, and people tremble with fear when they think of the approach of death. Why ? Because it stamps, fixes, the doom of the individual soul and stereotypes the individual so that it lasts for ever. Now the wicked man, who has no religion, will have to suffer throughout eternity. Now science has opened our eyes to the fact that death is not such an evil. Have courage ; it is not an enemy attacking life ; we cannot live without dying ; death is a constant continuation of life. Growth would be impossible if there were no death, so there is no reason to fear death.

A scientific thinker does not fear death, but regards it as a necessity for change, or growth. By death science means a change—change from one form into another. In our lifetime we see that naturally every seventh year we have almost a new body, and every molecule of our body is constantly changing. Every microscopic cell in our organism

is producing new forms ; old forms are dying, different new forms are coming up. When you plant a tree you will see how the seed dies before the plant begins to grow. So death is the beginning of a new stage of life, and, therefore, we must not cling to that old belief, thinking that we must regard death as the constant enemy of life. But we must regard death as a friend of life. Now, if by death understand a change, then the word *immortality* will receive a new meaning ; that is, that state which does not die, is not subject to death. Or, in other words, immortality means a state which is absolute, unchangeable, a state that is deathless, or absolutely unchangeable. So the real meaning of immortality is persisting in existence without being subject to any change whatever. Now, if that be the meaning of immortality, is there any state which is absolutely free from changes of all kinds, absolutely unchangeable ? This is a great question. The answer to this question is very deep. We shall have to analyze the whole phenomenal world to find out if such a thing as unchangeability exists. For science, tells us that everything is subject to change. Everywhere we see signs of change and decay. You all know how the solar system has come into existence from one mass of nebulous matter. Gradually it becomes congealed from that gaseous form, and become solid. Then again it goes back to that gaseous

state. Our physical bodies are subject to change. In fact, our bodies are for ever changing. If you can imagine yourself as a whirlpool in ether, or, if you have seen your hand through the X-rays, then you will know what your body is like. All around yourself there are the same ethereal particles of matter in a homogenous mass, impenetrable, a thick solid substance. There is no space between the particles; you cannot separate them. In that mass there is a little eddy, here and there, and that we call our bodies. Every minute cell of the body is constantly under change or vibration. We understand by sensation that something comes from the external world, some kind of stimulus comes, either in the form of light vibration, or in the form of air vibration, and that affects our nervous systems, produces certain change in the optical nerves, the different nerves of the brain cells, and there a certain vibration is produced, and that vibration is preceded by consciousness into change. So we see at every step there is a change. Without change we cannot hear any sound; we cannot smell anything. All the feelings and thoughts are also certain kinds of vibrations. They grow and disappear. One range of vibrations lifts us on a certain region of consciousness, and produces other vibrations, or emotions.

All these vibrations are changes. Our whole being is subject to change. Then where

is that immortal existence? We ask this question to a scientist. Science does not answer. There is no such thing in the world as absolute unchangeability. The phenomena of the world must change. Anything that exists in time, in space, is subject to change. So with any form we can imagine. Form may be of matter or ether, but in either case, it is subject to change. Now, if by *immortality* we mean that the soul will be clothed with a new form, and will go to heaven and enjoy celestial pleasures during eternity, clothed in etherial form, subject to no change throughout eternity, can we imagine an etherial form which will last like a statue, because any emotion or any feeling, presupposes some kind of change, so that it will have a body, which would not be subject to any kind of change? We cannot conceive of. So, immortality cannot be applied to celestial bodies, no matter how fine or etherial they may be.

If we analyze the conceptions of pleasure, you could have no conception of pain. We can only know what one feeling is by comparing it with a feeling we had before, and knowing the difference. And then, if we are going to enjoy pleasure throughout eternity, we must have some sort of conception of pain, or we cannot enjoy pleasure throughout eternity. It is for that reason that those who believe in an eternity, will have to believe in eternal hell-fire. The

underlying truth of this is that we cannot enjoy the one without experiencing the other.

In the gross description of hell and heaven, we find that there is a glass wall separating hell from heaven through which the souls enjoying celestial pleasures, can see the others suffering, and can compare and enjoy their pleasures ; otherwise there is no enjoyment. It would be truly impossible for us to enjoy that pleasure if we enjoy that all the time, and have no break. Now, if you like music and hear music day and night, without doing anything else, music would be a pleasure no more. Within six hours you would be tired of it. If you see one colour all the time, it would no longer be a colour. If you can go to heaven and remain there throughout eternity, it would be no pleasure at all. Now, under all these conditions we can neither find that eternal life in heaven with the finer body, is the meaning of immortality, nor the enjoyment of celestial pleasures of the same kind, without having any condition for comparison is the meaning of immortality. Those who believe that immortality means a personal immortality, do not understand the meaning of the word *personality*. What is the meaning of personality ? It is a kind of mask ; it is a garment of the mind. We have read of double, triple and quadruple personality. There was a girl in England, who had ten personalities, each of which was distinct. So, by *personality*

we must not understand a certain state of consciousness. It is like an assumed character on the stage. When the individual soul assumes a certain character and plays a certain part in the drama of life, then that particular character is the particular personality for the time being. Then when different ideas develop, different tendencies and desires appear, then different personality comes up ; we forget our old personality. If we analyze our personality, we will find that it is subject to disease, decay and death. Therefore, the personality does not mean the absolute unchangeable state on this plane, or in heaven.

Some persons believe that this immortality is a conditional immortality, it is not a natural gift but it is a certain gift of God to certain individuals. Then comes the the question as to what gift it is, and under what conditions it is received. Who will decide how many degrees above error one must be in order to obtain that gift from God ? Some people may say a certain mode of living, certain work, certain devotional exercises. Still if we analyze these devotional exercises, and those mental and physical works, we will find that all our actions are governed by action and reaction, law of cause and sequence ; for, every cause must produce an effect. Now, if the result be eternal or everlasting, the cause must be eternal or everlasting. A finite cause can never produce an infinite result.

It is against the law of nature. Now, all our actions are either good or evil. If we add all our good and evil actions during a lifetime, even of a hundred years, they cannot be unlimited. Their effect, therefore, cannot be unlimited. Realize then that the cause must be limited too. God cannot change that law, because, no matter how powerful He may be, it is His own law. Can we imagine the law of cause and sequence stopping for a second? The whole universe would fall to pieces. It would not be the same. So, those who believe that God changes the laws of nature are simply making some statements which have no grounds whatever. We cannot take any stock in those statements. So, God cannot give a free gift to any individual indiscriminately. Because the theologians say there must be some kind of devotional exercises to bring that gift. Now, if we depend upon some devotional exercise, then that is a limited cause, and must produce a limited effect. Then everlasting life as the reward of all our good acts, is an impossibility. We cannot get it; it would be contrary to the laws of nature. Therefore, all the philosophers in India do not believe in such a statement. They believe in many heavens, and by the law of *Karma*, the law of action and reaction, they try to explain that earthly life is subject to change as heavenly. Therefore eternal life is not eternal, it is temporary. Millions and millions

of years, when compared to eternity, would appear to you like a flash of light ; it is temporary. Therefore, all the great philosophers in India have said :

‘From the highest heaven to the limit of the universes all these different planes of existence are subject to growth and to change.’⁵⁷

Those who do good' deeds, go to heaven, may remain there till their time expires, and then they go to some other realms. They may return to this earth. Or, if they go to heaven, they may enjoy celestial pleasures there for thousands of years. But it must end. Even if we get celestial bodies, those bodies being subject to change, we will have the sensations of pleasure and pain. Then all those higher beings, the angels and archangels who dwell in those celestial regions, are limited. They may have psychic perception, but still there is limitation. And that conception we find in no other religion or philosophy, except in the writings of the great thinkers of the Vedic age. Because they went deeper ; they would not accept anything on hearsay. A revelation of God which does not appeal to reason, which does not touch our own senses, which does not conform to all the laws of nature, cannot be the truth. If Christ was possessed of immortal life, then each one of us must have it by birthright, otherwise Christ had not got it. There is one universal law,

57. *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, Ch. VIII, 16.

just as the law of light, the law of action and reaction, the law of cause and sequence. They are all alike. And we find at every step this law prevails. As science says :

‘Discover the laws of nature ; if you cannot harmonize the truths of Christ with the laws of nature, you have not discovered any truth.’

Your going to heaven does not mean immortality ; having a celestial body does not mean that. Then where is the meaning of immortality ? Is it possible to have anything unchangeable in this world of changes ? That question disturbed the minds of thinkers long ago, and today Kant, Huxley and Ernst Haeckel have all tried to discover something that is unchangeable, that is absolute Truth. But have they discovered it ? Those who have searched can be divided into two classes. The one may be classed as materialists. They deny the existence of soul as separate from the body, and according to them, all such questions as immortality of God and souls, are mere waste of time and energy. Of course, they try to find out everything from matter and force. They say force is immortal, energy is immortal and that is all. But can we remain contented after hearing these conclusions of the great materialistic thinkers of the world ? These materialistic thinkers are not the product of the twentieth century alone. In olden times, even in the Vedic age, there were those who denied the existence of anything which

existed beyond the range of our preception, anything that is abstract ; something like soul or God they denied, and they did not find that soul exists independently of the body.

Among the modern scientists you will find that there is such a class, but their arguments do not satisfy our minds. Even if they tell us there is no soul, a voice within tells us : 'Go and search again, you will find something better.' So, if we go on searching, at every step we hear a voice speaking from within : 'There is something immortal.' Otherwise this question of immortality would never arise. Because our longing for immortality is too strong, we cannot resist it. Try to think of yourself as dead, you cannot. You may think of your body as lying dead, but you are standing beside it, and watching over it. You cannot think of yourself as non-existent ; so that you will not exist is impossible. Because the very idea that you are dead, that you have ceased to exist, presupposes that you are conscious of that ideas, and therefore, you cannot. Why is it that if our whole nature was not meant to last throughout eternity, that we have such an idea ? It is part and parcel of our being, and we must go on searching until we find it. Those who imagine that body and soul last throughout eternity, are mistaken. The atoms will arise, because they are indestructible. The astral body is destructible. The finer etherial form, which may

manifest itself through cells, is not eternal, it is earthly. Then where is the immortal spark of our own being? In searching within the body, within the realms of the mind and the intellect, the great thinkers and inspired sages of the Vedic age declared that our soul is immortal. The soul is like the receptacle of a finer substance, which is like the source of our conscious existence, and that source is immortal. It is not subject to change. It is called the *Atman*. It is not the same as ego (*jivatman*), but it is the knower of the ego. It is not the same as 'I', but that by which we know ourselves, by which we say : I am standing here, I am hearing, that is our true self; that is the *Atman*. You may say : 'How can we know the existence of such a thing'? You do not have to search outside, it is already within. Tell me, are you ever conscious of your brain? You are never conscious of your brain. You do not know you are a part of the brain. Who knows matter? If the source of consciousness is the source of matter, then who knows matter? Matter does not know itself.

Modern science has resolved the whole phenomenal universe into three states, and has explained that they are matter, energy and consciousness. These three things are the fundamental principles of the universe. If you study science or any of the philosophies of the world, you will find also these three things,

matter, consciousness and energy. Matter, force or energy are inseparable ; they are the different states of the same substance. Then there comes the third thing, consciousness. Most of the materialistic thinkers try to divorce consciousness from matter and force, and the idealists try to divorce matter and force from mind or consciousness. A modern Christian scientist says that there is no matter ; it is all mind and all consciousness. But ask them what they mean by mind, and what they mean by matter. They will say they do not know. In fact, all these three, matter, force and consciousness, are indestructible, incorruptible and eternal. The question comes up : What is the nature of the third substance ? What becomes of the third substance ? If matter is indestructible, force is indestructible, then what becomes of consciousness ? Shall we believe it to be the result of matter and force, as the materialists declare, because it is an absurdity ? When you have the conception of matter, it is a state of consciousness, i.e., knowingness. When you have the conception of force or energy, it is a material state. They are incorruptible and indestructible. If two states of consciousness be indestructible, what will be the nature of consciousness itself ? Will it be indestructible ? If the fruit of the tree is indestructible and eternal, can you believe that the tree is destructible and non-eternal ? These are the

fruits of the tree of consciousness, and if the two states of consciousness be indestructible and eternal, then the tree of consciousness is also indestructible and eternal. We cannot know the existence of matter if we are unconscious. Put a scientist into the chloroform state, ask him if he is conscious of the existence of matter. He does not know ; he is unconscious. You may look through a microscope at an atom, and divide it into the subdivisions into which you divide it into an electron or an aeon. If these be incorruptible and indestructible, then the two states are indestructible. If is always the knower which knows ; matter does not know, energy does not know, and this knower is our true Self. It is not far from us, it is the innermost being within us.

Your mental condition may change ; you may be in anger, you may have another passion, you may have certain desire, you may think of the body, you may think of yourself as wicked or spiritual, but all the time you know these feelings are nothing but different states of your consciousness. It is the background of the spirit of your personality, like the background of the canvas upon which your personality is painted by the Divine hand. You may change the picture, but the canvas is always there. We can realize our true Self, which will be more everlasting than celestial pleasure, will be as eternal as Divinity itself.

The books will not reveal this Truth. By reading books and scriptures, and their commentaries we cannot know this Truth. We cannot understand our immortal nature by thought, nor by works, nor by devotional exercises, but we must search for it. Then separate the source of consciousness from its attachment to material things, analyze your own nature, and discriminate. See what part is in you that is unchanging, always like the witness which is the knower of the body, sense perceptions, intellect, apprehensions and feelings. Realize that *Atman*. Enter into the cave of your heart. Through the practices of Râja Yoga, through concentration and meditation, enter into the state of superconsciousness, and there you will be free. There you will realize you are free from the body, free from mind. You are, in truth, beyond body, beyond mind, beyond intellect and beyond death. Death cannot touch you and the fear of death will vanish from you for ever when you will know that fire cannot burn you, water cannot moisten you, air cannot dry you, and swords cannot pierce you. You are immortal, unchanging, eternal, everlasting and divine.⁵⁸ What fear can you have. Fear of death cannot exist. All fear proceeds from ignorance and selfishness. When you have eliminated all ignorance, the Divine illumination has come, the self-effulgent sun of Light, the sun

58. Vide *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, Ch. II, 23-24.

of wisdom will shine above the horizon of your mental plane, and there you will see the light ; a glimpse of the eternal Truth and of God will come to you, and then you will see what is real, what is immortal. And if you study all the scriptures of the Hindus you will find that there is one word, 'the divine thought if immortality is the highest ideal of the Hindu scriptures.' But how is it to be obtained ? By being conscious of your immortal nature. Knowing is being. When you know yourself immortal, you are immortal. But if you know yourself a limited physical thing, you are going to die. All our knowledge is a state of consciousness. So, if you change this state of consciousness, you will never die. Because you are yourself the changeless principle ; change of any kind will not affect you. Change is fleeting and unreal, but you are immortal.

When you know God, you have attained everything. To know God means *to be God*— '*Brahmavid Brahmaiva bhavati*'. God when known by some other being, by a mortal like us, is no longer God. But if we wish to know God, we must know our true Self, which is immortal, divine, eternal, everlasting and one, without the second.

CHAPTER TEN

SPIRITUALISM

Different questions about death—The popular belief in the soul—Three theories for proving the existence of the soul—The materialistic theory—The examination of the brain—Speech-centre and the brain—The mind and the brain—The combination theory—The transmission theory—What the dying persons do—What happens after death—Vedânta and the transmission theory—Mind and matter—Mind and the brain—*Individuality and personality*—Souls after death—*Personality* is subject to change—An instance of the in the other world—What do we mean by life after death—Heavens are not eternal—What is eternity—Souls create their own conditions—Teachings of Vedânta are in perfect harmony with the nature—We are the creators of our destinies.

As we have discussed already that the question often rises in our minds, what exists after death? This question rises today, and it will rise always in the minds of all. The same question was asked by kings and beggars, by sages and saints, by philosophers, thinkers and religionists of all countries all over the world. We are discussing it today. Tomorrow the same question will rise again in other minds. For the moment we might forget—we might not take heed of the condition after the death of the physical body. But the time is sure to come when we shall wake up, when we would ask the same question. We might be absorbed in our daily occupations, in the struggles for existence, in troubles and tribulations which we have to encounter every day. We may forget that we will live after death, or what will happen after death. But as soon as we see some one passes, the relatives, dearest and nearest friends pass out of the

body, we stop and think : Where has he gone ? What has become of the body ? The body is going to decompose. What was there to keep it alive, and where has it gone now ? The same question will arise again and again, and disturb the peace of our minds, and until we find the proper solution of the question we can never have peace in our minds.

But before we find the solution of that problem, we discover at the very threshold of our inquiry an adamant wall standing before us, which it is almost impossible to break through. Weak intellects stop there. Feeble minds with feeble efforts fail to go beyond that wall, and that wall is nothing but a belief that the body is the producer of the soul, that the soul is the result of the functions of the organism of this gross material body.

The popular belief that every soul will rise after death because of the miraculous resurrection of one particular individual at a certain time, does not appeal to our minds any more. We have outgrown those states of foolish belief and blind faith. We wish to get positive proofs. We want to discuss the subject psychologically, metaphysically, and scientifically. Now let us see whether this theory, that the body produces the soul, is correct.

There are three theories given in the attempts to prove the existence of soul : the one is the *production theory* ; the other is the

combination theory, and the third is the *transmission theory*. The *production theory* is the theory described by the atheists, agnostics, materialists, and evolutionists. They believe that the body produces the soul, but they do not answer the question, how body can produce a soul which is a mass of thought, a mass of intelligence or whatever they may call it. These materialistic thinkers might tell you that a body is produced of other bodies, that is, the bodies of the parents. But what force is there that holds all the molecules and particles of matter together and combines them and produces your body in one particular form and my body in another form? What makes these distinctions? They do not answer those questions. They say it is unknown to us; it is a mystery; but the bodies of the parents produce the body of the children, and this is true. But what produces the body of the parents? They say their parents. But that is not the true answer. In trying to explain they produce another combination of matter without explaining the forces which combine and reproduce these conditions.

They simply make an assertion, and that assertion leads to a fallacy, that is, the body produces a body, but that is not the real cause that produces the human body. It is like explaining the cause by the effect, like putting the cart before the horse. So, the explanation does not appeal to our minds. At the same

time we notice that among the hosts of physiologists, medical practitioners and pathologists, there is a belief that the body produces the soul of thought, of intelligence, of consciousness, of whatever you may call the mind. And some have gone so far as to locate the particular functions of the mind in some particular parts of the brain. For instance, when we see objects before our presence, particular convolutions of the brain are stimulated ; and when we hear a sound, our tympanal lobes are stimulated, and so on. Those who believe in the *production theory* tell that mind is conterminous with the functions of the brain, with the nervous states, and they try to explain that so long as the brain is active the mind exists, but when the brain stops its functions then the mind is dead; the mind cannot live independent of the functions of the brain. And their theory is that certain impressions come through our nerves and they are poured into the brain by the peculiar function of the brain. They are metamorphosed into ideas, thoughts, emotions, feelings, sensations, expressions of the face, speech and so on. Just as food-stuff after falling into the stomach is metamorphosed and changed into different elements by digestion, as the stomach is functioning to produce digestion, and as the liver is to secrete bile, so the brain secretes thoughts, intelligence, and consciousness. And that is their argument. According to them, impressions are

like material bodies, like body-stuffs that go into our nerves and fall into the pot of the brain and are instantly changed into that intelligence, ideas and so on.

But when we examine the brain properly, we find that a man can live and perform his functions even when half of his brain is diseased and decayed. Such cases have been experimented upon and recorded. There is a great medical surgeon and physician in New York City, Doctor Thompson, who is an authority in Roosevelt Hospital. He has written a book in which he describes the records and statistics that have been taken after post-mortem examinations. A man had lost half of his brain. It was absolutely gone, and in his whole lifetime he did not know at what time he had lost the half of his brain. It made no change in his mode of life, in his thoughts, in his occupation. He could utilize the one half of the brain that was in good condition and make it perform the functions of both halves.

You see a man who uses his right hand. His centre of speech is on the left side of the brain. Now this is one of the most important proofs that has been brought out by scientific men of this age. Our speech-centre depends upon the action of our arms to a great extent. A left-handed man has his speech centre developed on the right side of the brain and

the right-handed man has his speech-centre on the left side of the brain.

If one half of the brain is decayed or diseased, and if that man be right-handed, and the left side of the brain is diseased, then he becomes absolutely mute, dumb, he cannot speak. But if he uses the left hand, after a few days or a few weeks he will be able to develop a speech-centre on the right side of the brain, and then he will be able to speak his language fluently. These are experimented and are proved facts.

What do these prove? That mind is something distinct from the brain, that is, brain is the instrument which is utilized by the soul or the mind or what ever you may call it. You may call it *personality*. Personality is not the result of the function of the brain; but, on the contrary, it is the one who uses the instrument of the brain as if from outside. We may compare the brain with a piano. That is, a piano can produce music when there is music in the soul of the musician. But there is no music in the piano. It must be in the conscious mind of the musician, who must be outside of the piano and who must play upon the keys. So, there is the music of all the activities, harmonious activities of our body and mind, and that harmony is in the mind of the soul, and that soul is playing upon the cells of the nerve-centres in the brain from the outside. As

if the brain is overshadowed by some invisible entity, who is playing upon the brain producing its harmony. Or, if there be no harmony of music in the soul, there is discord, which are manifested in ourselves.' So the *production theory* has become almost absurd today. No scientific thinkers who have studied all these experiments made by the great scientists of the world, can believe any more in the theory that the brain secretes the consciousness as the liver secretes bile. It is an absolutely irrational statement.

The *combination theory* is that the neural current is a stream which produces a stream of feelings. There is no connection between them. They are running simultaneously. Some of the psychologies that are taught in the schools and colleges teach the idea that consciousness is a stream, a complex thing, made up of a stream of feelings, and when these currents pass through the nerves and through ganglia and through cortical walls, these cortical walls make a resistance. This resistance produces a kind of glow, nerve-glow, white heat-glow, and that glow is their consciousness. That is a very absurd idea.

We have another explanation better than this. But the point is that the *transmission theory* is more satisfactory. According to this theory the soul or mind is outside of the brain. It is not the result of the brain, but it is something like a self-conscious entity which is

using the brain, just as a musician uses the piano and plays on the keys. Now that theory is generally accepted by all the spiritualists and the religionists, by all the metaphysicians and philosophers. They understand the true language of the soul and its relation to the body. Those who do not believe in the *transmission theory*, cannot explain how these instances of phenomena which are recorded by the Psychical Research Society of America as well as of Europe and elsewhere, happen, such as, the appearance of the *double*. For instance, when you are sitting in your room, and you are absolutely in repose while conscious, reclining in a rocking chair or on a couch, you are alone and your mind is greatly disturbed by some business problem. You do not know how to answer it. Suppose there is no one to disturb you or interfere with you in any way, in the room or in the house. Your door is locked. Now, suddenly you see your *double*. This something is like yourself, coming out of you, going to the desk, taking a piece of paper and a pencil in hand and solving your problem and leaving the written answer on the paper. Then you are dreaming, as it were, and suddenly you wake up and go to your desk and you find the solution. You remember that you saw your double, but you do not know what it is. It is like an apparition. There have been many such instances. How do you explain

this? Who has done it? Did somebody else go into that etherial form, which is similar to your own form, from outside? And even if you believe that, you admit the existence of intelligence, of an intelligent entity, which can exist without the material, gross, physical body, and that can satisfy your mind. But these cases cannot be explained by any other theory than the *transmission theory*. This *transmission theory* tells us that the *double* is the astral self of the individual, and this astral self is something which can live independent of the gross material body. This astral self can pass out and can appear in etherial form and perform many acts which our ordinary waking self cannot perform. These astral *doubles* are sometimes perceived by people, by relatives and friends of dying persons.

It is found that the dying persons may have a very strong attachment to their children. If their children are going to be orphans, that is, if there is no one to take care of their children, and if their relatives are at a distance, their great desire to help their children would make them project their astral or their *double* and appear before the relatives and give a sudden message. Sometimes it happens after the death of the individual. In most cases it is at the time of death, just at the moment when the individual is passing out of the body, or the minute



Spirit Materialized.



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before. There have been records of both kinds. Now, how do you explain these if you do not believe in the *transmission theory*? If the soul is the result of the functions of the brain, then everything would be at an end. But it is not. Now these experiments have proved that there is such a thing as a soul, or a personality, or an entity which is self-conscious and which continues to live even when the gross physical body is left behind. Vedânta accepts the *transmission theory*. Vedânta tells us that matter is one half of the universe, which is the object, and mind is the other half of the universe, which is the subject. The one half of the universe cannot produce the other half, and they remain simultaneously. They are in existence from the very beginning simultaneously. That is the existence of both mind and matter. Matter is the object of perception, and mind is the perceiver, the one who perceives. And so you cannot have any sensation of perception of matter if there be no subject in you who perceives. Our knowledge of matter is nothing but a state of our mind, *i.e.* the state of our consciousness. This mind or consciousness must be prior to any condition of matter or any experience of sensation or of feelings that are produced by the contact of matter with our senses. No one can deny the priority of consciousness—of self-consciousness. If you are

unconscious, you cannot have any perception. So you see that every experience that we have, is more or less subjective. What we call our knowledge of matter, is only a personal knowledge of the object. But a great deal of that knowledge is subjective. That is, we are conscious of our own minds. We cannot get out of our own minds anywhere. You cannot go into the chair of the table and find out what is going on there and how the table affects your senses and produces the sensation. If such sensations are the states of consciousness of your own mind, you know that there is such a thing as a table or a chair ; otherwise you can never do it. Now, one of the scientific facts is that motion produces nothing but motion. But our consciousness or our intelligence is not motion. Can you prove this ? No. It is something beyond motion. It is that which understands and knows motion. So, how can motion produce the activity of the brain or activity of the molecules, of the nerves of the brain cells ? How can that motion produce something which does not know itself ? That is a proof against all the materialistic theories. Therefore to say that the soul is the result of the function of the brain, that is, to say that the intelligent entity is the result of the function of the brain, is an impossibility.

Referring to that priority of mind, when you dissect a brain, for instance, and you

do not find any such thing as self-existing or self-conscious entity, you deny the existence of a soul; and this very denial in that particular case presupposes the existence of another mind which must think that way, the mind of the dissector. So it is always, in every instance, there is the priority of mind before any conception that you can make. If you say that you have no soul, it would be just as absurd as if I say at this moment that I have no tongue. I am using this tongue while I am talking, and if I deny the existence of tongue I would be a fool. Similarly, if you deny the existence of your own self as a self-conscious entity, you are using that self-conscious entity as a foundation while you are denying it, which would be absurd and ridiculous. Now, after realizing this condition, that the soul is that self-conscious entity which is prior to all the material conditions and which is not the result of the motion, we ask the question: whether that soul can retain its individuality? Here you will notice little distinction between individuality and personality. Now, many people get these mixed up.

Some people think personality is individuality and individuality is personality. But we will go to the root of these two words and we will keep the original meaning before our mind; then we will have no more confusion. The word *personality* comes from the Latin *persona*, the mask. So personality is that

particular consciousness which is related to the physical body. Thus, you are Mr. or Mrs. or Miss so and so ; that is your personality. You are an active man ; you are a business man ; you have hunger and thirst and all these limitations of the body. That is the mask which the individual is wearing at the present moment. But *individuality* is something which is beyond the body, which is indivisible. Again that, which is indivisible you cannot cut or disturb. It is like your sense of *I*. It is like an indivisible current. It is the continuity of the one thought, the thought of *I*. As for example, I was a school boy. I played with my school mates. The same '*I*' have gone through all these other experiences. Now '*I*' am standing or sitting here. That is identity, or foundation, or individuality. It is indivisible. It is the property of our spiritual self or consciousness. It has no relation to our personality at all. The personality, might be left here, might change, but our individuality the sense of '*I*,' can never change, because that sense of '*I*' will continue to exist with us no matter where we go. We are a unit of force and that unit is a self-conscious unit, and when we leave this body we take that sense of '*I*' with us. Whether we have a gross physical or an astral or a causal body, we have always the sense of '*I*' with us. When we dream, we have the sense of '*I*' within. When we are in sound sleep, we have this sense ;

otherwise we would not remember that we slept and had no dreams. We can never get rid of this, our sense of 'I,' unless we attain to the highest liberation or the freedom of the soul and become one with God. Then we feel our individuality as infinite, just as the individuality of Christ was not lost when he realized that he and his Father were one, but it became infinitely expanded. We can never lose our individuality.

Sometimes some of the souls, after passing out of the body at the time of death, contract all the forces that are scattered all over the body and come to a point, to a nucleus like an atom, and there it may lose its personality for the time being. That personality is subject to change, and might hold it in an earth-bound condition. If it has strong attachments to relatives or friends, and if it cannot get over those attachments, it hovers around them, remains close to them, tries to help them, to be loved by them, and there it is conscious of its personality. For instance, if I build a beautiful house, and that beautiful house abounds in beautiful furniture and such things, and if I have devoted most of my time to decorating that house, I become so attached to it that after death I would dislike to leave that spot I would remain right there, invisible. I might not be seen by others, but my strong attachment will hold me there in that place. I would be wondering while my relatives and

friends and all the dearest ones do not recognize me, and there I have to suffer. Now, that is what happens with certain people. They do not know that they are dead. They retain their personality. At the time of a war there are solidiers who are dying with the feelings of revenge and hatred and anger in their hearts. After death they will find that they are continuously fighting. They project the forms of their enemies and they try to fight against them. It is a state of unrest. It is just like a state of hell. And there is worse hellish condition after the death of soldiers in the spirit world than they have here. Sometimes a soul passes out suddenly, when his body is blown into atoms through an explosion. The shock of that explosion is so great that the soul will remain unconscious for a long time. There will be no further progress of this soul. Those who understand the spiritual laws, will never advocate war. Because we have no right to take the lives of individuals, especially of our own brethren, who have come to this world to develop their conditions. Instead of helping them we are taking their life, cutting it short suddenly, by swords and by all kinds of instruments of war. It is a terrible state of affairs, and the souls after passing out of this body are in a state of unconsciousness. They do not know where they are. They are in utter confusion. They need help and they need some one to guide

them, to make them realize that they have left their bodies.

A story now comes to my mind, of what was supposed to have been a communication from one of the residents of that city, Los Angeles, who passed away in 1913. He was a Supreme Court Judge, and he was supposed to communicate with this world through some friends. It was a very terrible condition for the particular woman whom he met in the other world, and whom he knew in this world. The woman was living in a boarding house. After she passed out she was still living in a boarding-house. She was eating beef steak and meat and potatoes, but she did not like the coffee. The coffee was very poor. And she grumbled. She said: "It is terrible. I cannot sit at the table with the same friends. And potatoes are not very good." But still she was hungry and she ate. Now, that gives the idea of what we can do when we are in an earth-bound condition. She did not realize that she had passed away. She was still living. She thought that it was funny she did not have the same or better friends than she had here in this world. *That shows that we take all our desires with us after death, and we manufacture these objects of enjoyment by our thoughts.* The realm beyond death is the realm of realized ideals or of realized thoughts. If we think of a piece of bread, the bread is there and we will eat.

If we feel hungry, we are eating. If we think of coffee, we are drinking coffee. Therefore, we see how important it is for us to understand this, that if we die with the attachment to any particular kind of food, any particular kind of clothes or jewels, or anything in this life, we carry that attachment with us and with our desires we manufacture those things out of the finer material in the spirit world. Instead of progressing and instead of casting off these first conditions, which are narrow and which limit the progress of the souls, we take them with us and continue to enjoy them until we go to sleep and wake up. If our good thoughts and deeds would help us, we would go on progressing. But many of the departed spirits remain in that state of delusion for a long time. Our time does not affect the spirits. Our thousand years may be five days to them, because ours is according to our standard and theirs according to their standard. So, no one can say how long a soul will remain in any particular condition. But it is important that we should remember this law, that we create our future, we create our destiny and we build our character by our thoughts and deeds.

It is not that we suddenly get transformed and grow wings, but it is the continuity of this present life. Life after death means the continuity of this life, only on another plane. It is not a place. There is

no space-relation. It is like a wheel within a wheel. Just as you can hear the vibrations of different musical instruments; one can be of low vibration and another of high; both can exist without interfering with each other; at the same time you can hear both. Similarly, around this earth there is a spirit-world. It is like a fourth dimension. It is on another plane. All that exist here do not exist there, because space-relations do not exist there.

Those who have firm faith and believe in a heaven where the angels sing the praises of the Lord and where there would be peace like the peace on Sunday in a city, where everything is closed, or in a peaceful church, will find them there. Because we all the human beings are attracted to those dreamlike states which we call heaven. There are many such heavens. The Mohammedan, who believes in the *houris* and the drinking of wine and having fine air and plenty of shade, and if he holds that as an ideal, will go to a plane of consciousness where he will project all these ideas and make his own heaven. Those who have similar ideas, will be with him.

But these conditions are not eternal. They are like dream states. There are many such heavens. Each nation or each particular tribe among the different nations has held a certain belief of what they would enjoy after death in a celestial realm. For instance, the

Red Indians, who have their beliefs in the hunting grounds. They believe in that like an old Scandinavian going to Valhalla. There they would sit in front of Odin and fight with their other friends. During the fight they would be wounded and then miraculously healed of their wounds. Then they would run and chase a wild boar and have a big feast, and this will continue every day throughout eternity. Some will find peace that way, but not throughout eternity. Eternity is a long time, and even millions of years are not to be considered as eternity. Eternity means time without end and without beginning. It is just like a circle. It is always a circle. All progress must go up to a certain point, and then it will come back again. Some go to heaven suddenly. At the time of the expiration if their celestial happiness, their other desires, that are dormant for the time being, will wake up those will bring them down to this plane again. They will be born again as human beings. So we need not get frightened about it, for they already possess such desires. There is no one who forces them, but it is their desires that create their own conditions. That is the law. No one punishes the wicked; no one rewards the virtuous but the individual soul rewards and punishes itself as the result of its own thoughts and deeds. We gravitate. We are here because we have the desire to come to this world and enjoy certain pleasures

and gain certain experiences which we could not get anywhere else. And the same conditions prevail after we have gone to heaven. We will come back here again and gain some new experiences. And this is a great blessing to us that it is so. Otherwise, it would be a very monotonous state of affairs to play on the same harp. I would not enjoy that. You might, because you have been trained to believe that is a high state. So the condition is this, that after death we continue to live and go through different realms where we develop certain powers, and each of them we must remember, contains potentialities and possibilities. We must not think that one plane of three score years and then has finished your manifestation. It could not be. The Christians have been taught that the Lord created them at the time of their births and they came suddenly out of nothing, and they will continue to live for ever. That is not possible. Because, eternal life does not mean that it has a beginning at one end and at the other it is endless. Can you imagine of a stick which you are holding one end and the other end would go to eternity and be endless? What has a beginning must have an end. That is the law of nature. No one can imagine having a beginning and no end. Some think that this physical body can be kept throughout eternity. But that which has birth must die. Of course, it may go through a transformation, but it

would not be the same body, just as we do not possess the same body which we had when we were babies. The baby-body is changed into the young body and that into the mature body. Every seven years every molecule of our body is renewed.

We have not the same brain, same sense of sight or same sense of hearing. It is constantly changing. But in the midst of these changes there is *something* unchangeable, and unless you realize that *something*, you expect to have peace and happiness. Because in the midst of all changes, you remain as the master, the centre, around which all the changes are going on like a whirlpool. We are the centre—the self-conscious entity, which can never die. So have faith in ourself that we are immortal. By immortality is meant *eternal life, both beginningless and endless*. No one has created us, no one could create us out of nothing. God Himself could not. He had not that power. It would be an absurdity. So, we existed first as a part of God, and have come to this world through experience and manifested our powers, and again we are going back to God. We really complete the circle. It is the play of the divine forces of nature, and we are only manifestations. Each individual unit of self-conscious entity will realize its infinite nature by going through a great many manifestations, either in this cycle or in a cycle that will come.

We must understand that the soul can come down from the heavenly plane to this plane of consciousness and be born again with more developed powers, either to gain new experiences or to help others to gain knowledge. There are certain souls who are perfected, who come down consciously remembering all that they have gone through. They remember it all. They have come down through sheer joys, as it were, to help humanity and set an example, like Christ or Buddha or other Saviours. But we do not have that power. We gravitate being freed by our past deeds. For instance, if I have the desire to be one of the best artists, and before I realize my ideal I suddenly pass away, do you think my desires will have gone for nothing? No, my desires will bring me back again and put me in proper environment, through the proper channel, so that I could realize my ideal once more. It is a great comfort that it is so. One plane is not enough for a life. We are often told that everything was fixed before we come to this human plane. But is it possible? How can one individual understand or know everything of this world of infinite phenomena unless he passes through infinite lives? And for that reason the teachings of Vedânta are in perfect harmony with nature. It does not condemn any such ideas but it puts them in their proper places. Some people have dreams of heavens. They will no doubt

go there. But if we are told that this attainment of heaven is an eternal state, then this statement cannot be a true one. So we must be careful of such statements. We must realize that the life after death is the continuation of the present life and we make our future according to our thoughts and deeds of the present life. We are the creators of our destiny, of our character, or our future. We shall continue to live and come back and be born again on this earth. The Scriptures say that we may go to some other planets where there are different conditions and there we may develop up the infinite realm of this universal spirit. There is no end of experiences, but a perfected soul reaches that state where there is no more birth, no more death, and no more disease, sorrow, or suffering. There reigns absolute peace and happiness, perfect knowledge, and perfect wisdom, which the highest goal of human life.⁵⁹

59. In the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* (4.4.6), we find : “*Tadeva saktaha sha karmanaiti * * na tasya prāna ukṛānti, Brahmai-va san Brahmāpyeti.*” That is, ‘being attached, he, together with the work, attains that result to which his subtle body (*sukshma-sharīram* or *lingam*) or mind is attached. Exhausting the results of whatever work he did in this life, he returns from that world to this for (fresh) work.’ Thus does the man who desires (transmigrates). But the man who does not desire never transmigrates. Of him who is without desires, who is free from desires, the objects of whose desire have been attained, and to whom all objects of desire are but the Self—the organs do not depart. Being but Brahman, he is merged in Brahman.” Vide also *Mundaka Upanishad*, 3.2.2.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SPIRITUALISM AND VEDANTA

Modern spiritualism—Ancestor-worship—Ancient Egyptians, Babylonians and Chaldeans and ancestor-worship—Religion of the ancient Chinese—The ancient Parsees—Judaism and Mohammedanism—The saint-worship among the Roman Catholics—The belief in departed spirits in India—*Pitri-Loka*—Mediums and seances—Vedānta and the law of *Karma*—The realm of the fathers and the path which leads to the realization of Truth—Earthbound souls—Mediums become more or less moral and physical wrecks in the end—The genuine phenomena of Spiritism—The attainment of God-consciousness is the highest ideal of Vedānta.

MODERN spiritualism claims to have a supernatural origin, like all other great religions of the world which have been founded upon supernatural revelations. It has played its most important part in toning down the dogmas of Christian theology, in reforming the religious belief, the vast majority of the American people, and in starting fresh inquiries and investigations in the realm beyond the grave.

Within the last fifty years modern spiritualism has given wonderful demonstrations regarding the existence of disembodied spirits who continue to live even after the dissolution of their gross material forms. It has brought comfort and consolation to the hearts of many people who were suffering from the evil effects of scepticism and unbelief concerning a future life, caused by the dry theories of the atheistic, agnostic, and materialistic thinkers of the last century.

Through the help of modern spiritualism

many of the educated and uneducated people of this country have now arrived at the conviction that there is such a thing as the human soul, a conscious entity which continues to exist after the death of the physical body. Modern spiritualism has taught that the souls of the dead are not destined to suffer eternally, but that they are comfortably situated, and that they do not forget their early friends and relatives, but, on the contrary, like guardian angels, they watch over their beloved ones and are always anxious to help them and protect them from the dangers and misfortunes that surround their earthly lives. Modern spiritualism has taken away the horror of the post-mortem condition of life. It has enabled human minds to look upon death as the threshold of that wonderland, the inhabitants of which enjoy new lives, new experiences, renewed pleasures and happiness. Thus, having established a belief in the life after death, modern spiritualism has claimed to lay the foundation of a religion under the direction of those spirits who have control over the mediums, or of those wise spirits who visit the spiritualistic seances, whether private or professional, with a desire to enlighten the minds of the sitters by imparting the knowledge of supernatural things.

The attempts of modern spiritualism thus to establish a religion upon the experiences gathered through the communications of de-

parted spirits, remind us of those ancient times when the primitive races were groping in the darkness of ignorance, when their minds were struggling hard to see a ray of light in that thick mist which veiled the realm beyond the threshold of death. In fact, the study of modern spiritualism leads us back to that age when the religion of the primitive tribes consisted in keeping up the memory of their dead relatives and friends ; when after seeing ghost-like apparitions of the deceased they came to believe that their ancestors were alive even when their bodies were mouldering in the grave. It also takes us back to that age when the principal form of worship was to please the departed spirits by doing such acts as they had liked most during their earthly career. This kind of ancestor-worship was the ancient form of spiritualism. Many scholars of modern times maintain that it was the beginning of all religions that are supposed to have a supernatural origin.

Ancestor-worship of course, as we all know, means a belief in the spirits of departed ancestors and in the supernatural powers that they possess, as well as our constant remembrance of them and our services in their memory, either by following their directions, or by seeking to rouse their sympathy and kindly feelings that they may help us during the distresses and misfortunes of our earthly lives. This ancestor-worship is to be found

in almost all religions. After studying the ancient religions of different countries we find clear traces of this old form of spiritualism among the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Assyrians, Chinese, Parsees, Hindus, and other races inhabiting different parts of the world.

It has already been said that the ancient Egyptians, like the modern spiritualists, believed in departed spirits. Their idea was that within the physical body of man there was a soul having the shape of the gross body in every respect, with smaller hands, feet, and other limbs. It was like the *double* or the counterpart of the physical man. When the physical man died, his counterpart, or the *double*, went out of the body and lived. The life of the *double*, according to the Egyptian belief, depended upon the condition of the material body, that is, so long as the gross form remained intact, the form of the *double* would remain perfect. But if any part of the dead body was mutilated or injured, the similar part of the *double* would also be injured or destroyed. It was for this reason they cared so much to preserve the dead bodies by making mummies and building pyramids. This belief was the fundamental principle of spiritualism and ancestor-worship of the ancient Egyptians.

The Babylonians and Chaldeans also believed in departed spirits, but not exactly in

the same manner as the Egyptians. They believed in the wandering shade of the dead, which was called *Ekimmu*, that is, a spectre. It was like the shape of the physical man with similar form. But they thought that it would meet with great misfortunes if the dead body were not buried with proper ceremonies. So they observed a great many ceremonies in order to make the departed souls free from all misfortunes. The Babylonians believed that the souls of those dead bodies which were not buried with proper ceremonies, could not enter the house of the dead, called *Arallu*, that is, the underground abode of the dead. It was like the *Sheol* of the Hebrews. Therefore the Babylonians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians took special care in burying the dead. The embalming of the dead body, the building of monuments and tombstones, the decorating of them with flowers, wreaths, flags, and other grave-offerings, which are practised today by the Christian nations in Europe and America, are but the remanants of the ancestor-worship of the ancient Babylonians and Chaldeans. These customs have been handed down to us, and we now blindly follow them without knowing their original meaning.

In the same manner, it can be shown that the religion of the ancient Chinese was purely ancestor-worship. The Chinese have always believed in the spirits of their departed ancestors and relatives. They invoke them,

seeking their help in time of need, and pray to them for welfare and prosperity. Even today the departed ancestors in China are honoured with titles and praises for the meritorious acts performed by their descendants.

The ancient Parsees believed in the spirits of their dead forefathers and called them *Fravashis*, or Fathers. According to their belief, the spirits of the righteous were raised to the rank of angels, arch-angels and gods. The Parsees used to invoke them, praise them, pray to them, and ask help and blessings of them. They used to offer them food and other offerings in memory of the *Fravashis*, or Fathers. Thus we see that ancestor-worship, or the ancient form of Spiritualism, gave foundation to the religion of the Parsees as well as of the Egyptians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, and Chinese.

In Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism traces of ancestor-worship have been discovered by modern scholars and the higher critics of the scriptures. In the twenty-eighth chapter of first Samuel in the Old Testament we read that Saul went to consult with the witch of Endor, who had familiar spirits. At the request of Saul the witch invoked the spirit of Samuel, who appeared and gave him good counsels. The witches and wizards of the Old Testament were nothing more than the mediums of modern spiritualism. If the spiri-

tualistic mediums of the present day had lived about four centuries ago, they would have been condemned by the Church as witches, and perhaps would have been hanged or burned at the stake.

The Hebrew word *Elohim*, which has often been translated as God in the English Bible, was applied also to disembodied spirits. It is said that the witch of Endor saw *Elohim* ascending out of the earth. Here *Elohim* was used in the sense of disembodied spirit of the dead. It was a kind of materialization of the departed spirits such as is to be seen in seances today. Do we not find a clear trace of ancestor-worship in Judaism when we read :

‘And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and did obeisance.’⁶⁰

The saint-worship among the Roman Catholics is another form of ancestor-worship, or a remnant of ancient spiritualism. If we go to Rome or to any other part of Italy, we see the statues of canonized saints over their tombs, which are decorated with flowers and lighted candles. The spirits of those saints are invoked with prayers and offerings. In fact, the beginning of the altars of churches and temples can be traced back to the graves of ancestors who lived righteous lives.⁶¹

The offerings and sacrifices in the name of God likewise originated in the belief that the

60. *Samuel I* Ch. XXVIII, 14.

61. *Vide Notes.*

departed ancestors had hunger and thirst just as they had when they were in flesh and blood. That which was at first the food and drink for the dead, developed into the form of sacrifices. The Holy Communion, the offering of thanks, and the Eucharist of the Christians are only the relics of the ceremonies connected with the ancestor-worship or spirit-worship of the primitive people.

Similar ceremonies still prevail among heathen races who have never heard of Christ or of his crucifixion. They were the spontaneous expressions of human minds which revered and honoured the memory of their departed ancestors. The chants and praises which were used by primitive people to describe the virtues and the heroic qualities and deeds of their dead ancestors, have gradually taken the forms of hymns of praise which are sung in churches and temples. Both Christ and Mohammed believed in departed spirits, saw angels ascending and descending over their heads, and received revelations through those who were but the spirits of the righteous.

In India from very ancient times the belief in departed spirits has played an important part in shaping the religious ideals of the Hindus. This belief found expression in the oldest scriptural writings of the Vedic period. As early as the time of the Rigveda, which goes back at least five thousand years before the birth of Christ, this idea was very common,

and there we read many hymns with invocations addressed to the *pitrīs*, or departed fathers.⁶² They were invoked, praised, and invited to accept the offerings made to them at the time of the *shrâddha*. The Sanskrit word *shrâddha* means anything done in the memory of departed ancestors. It includes prayers, praises, and offerings. One of the daily duties of Hindu householders is to spend a few minutes in thinking of their departed ancestors, and in doing some good works in their name. They will feed the poor and hungry, or give clothes to the needy, or make pilgrimages in the name of their dead relatives. The Hindu belief is that the fruits of such good works, when performed in the name of the departed spirits, will go to them and help them in their onward progress. All virtuous deeds performed by the relatives and friends of the departed ones in the name of their ancestors will surely bring good results to them.

According to the religion of the Vedânta, the souls of ordinary mortals remain earth-

62. In the 10th Mandala of the Rigveda, there are 72 mantras between the 14th and 18th sukta. Those mantras or hymns have been addressed to Pitriloka, Yama, Pitriloka-devatâ, Agni, Sarayu, Pûsâ, Sarasvatî, Soma, Mrityu, Dhâtâ and Tasthâ in connection with the burial, cremation and partial cremation. In the 2nd hymn of the 18th Sukta we find also the seed of reincarnation of the soul : "*Shrilam yadâ karasi jâtavedo'themenam paridattât pîtribhyaha ; yadâ gacchatyāsunitimeta matha devānām vashanirbhavati.*" That is, "O Agni, when you will burn his body satisfactorily, send him then to the inhabitants of the *pitriloka*. When he will be born again ("*yadâ gacchatyāsunitimeta*"), he will be devoted to the *devatās*." This hymn proves also the existence of the soul in the world beyond death.

bound for some time after their death, and expect help from their relatives and friends who are left behind. Good thoughts and good deeds of the living help the departed spirits in obtaining release from the earth-bound condition, and thus they are enabled to rise higher and enter into the realm of the *pitris*, Manes, or Fathers, in order to reap the fruits of the virtuous deeds done either by themselves or performed for them or in their name by their descendants, friends, and relatives.

The realm of the ancestors is called *pitriloka*,⁶³ where the departed spirits of the ancestors enjoy heavenly life and celestial pleasures. This realm is ruled by the first of the mortals who through good works raised himself to that state of consciousness. He is called in Sanskrit *Yama*. Those who have read the *Katha Upahishad* and Sir Edwin Arnold's *Secret of Death*, are familiar with this

63. We give here the following references of the *pitriloka* from the Vedas, Brâhmanas, Upanishads and others :

(1) "*Pitaro Yamarâjye*" etc.—Vâjasaneyi-Samhitâ (*Mâdhyandina Shâkhâ*), 19-45; Matriyani-Samhitâ, 3-11-10; 156-11; Kathaka-Samhitâ, 38-2; Taittiriya-Brâhmana, 2-6-34; Amastamba-Shrauta-sutra, 1-9-12; Shânkyâna-Grihya-sutra, 5.9.4;

(2) "*Pitrisadanam tva lokam avastrinami*" etc.—Maitriyani-Samhitâ, 2-12; 3-3; 25-10; 26-5; Mânava-Shrauta-sutra, 1-8-2-9;

(3) "*Pitrisadane tva loka a sadayâmi*." etc.—Atharva Veda-Samhitâ, 18-4-67;

(4) "*Pitrinâm lokâm api gacchantu ye mritâh*" etc.—Atharva Veda-Samhitâ, 12-2-45; Vide also AV., 18-3-73;

12-2-9; 3-29-4; RV., 10-2-7; 10-15-1-14; 10-16-1-14;

(5) "*Pitrilokam gamayan jâtavedah*" etc.—Atharva Veda-Samhitâ, 18-4-64;

(6) "*Pitrilokât patim yatih*" etc.—AV., 14-2-52;

(7) "*Pitrin imâni lokâm*" etc.—Ashvalayana-Grihya-sutra, 4-7-11. Vide also Shânkyâyana-Grihya-sutra, 4-10-5.

word. *Yama*, the Ruler of the realm of the *pritis*, Manes, or Fathers, bestows all comforts and happiness according to the deserts of those who reach that plane of existence. The realm of the Fathers, or ancestors, corresponds to the heaven of the modern spiritualists. To go there is the highest ideal of ancient ancestor-worship as also of modern spiritualism. Spiritualism, whether ancient or modern, cannot describe any stage beyond the realm of the Fathers. The religion which the modern spiritualists preach and claim as the true religion, does not take us further than this belief that we shall meet our departed ancestors, friends, and relatives, rejoice in their company after death, and enjoy all the pleasures of life. The same ideal has been maintained by the ancestor-worshippers of all countries. The heaven of the ancestor worshippers of ancient times is the heaven of the modern spiritualists. It is the realm of the Fathers. Many people may doubt its existence, but there is no reason for such doubts. Spiritualism leads human minds only a step beyond the grave in the world, of phenomena and opens the way to the belief in this realm of departed spirits. Where the ideal of ancestor-worship or the heaven of modern spiritualism ends, there is the beginning of the higher religion of Vedânta, that points out the path that directs the individual souls to the eternal truth which is beyond all

phenomena, beyond heaven, above the realm of the Fathers, and even far beyond the reach of the angels or bright spirits or gods.

After ages of investigations into the nature of the life that one can possibly lead in the *pitriloka*, the Vedântic sages and seers of Truth have discovered that the heaven of the Fathers is not the highest abode of eternal Truth, that it is phenomenal and subject to the laws which govern the phenomenal universe; that the inhabitants thereof are bound by the law of Karma, that is, by the laws of cause and effect and of action and reaction, and that their stay on that plane is temporary, although it may last for thousands of years. The Vedântic seers of Truth say that the ancestors, or Fathers, do not know the highest truth, or the absolute reality of the universe, and being bound by desires, they cannot reach the plane of Divinity. - Consequently they cannot teach the divine truths which they do not know themselves.

These seers of absolute truth, having realized through their own experience that the inhabitants of the spirit world, or the heaven of the ancestors, or the realm of the *pitrîs*, do not and cannot know the highest truth on the plane of Divinity, and that, therefore, they cannot teach others, have warned their disciples, followers, and seekers after Truth in general not to waste their time and energy in seeking spiritual help from those departed

spirits who have no knowledge of truths that exist beyond the world of psychic phenomena, and who do not possess the power of helping any seeker after divine realization.

Disregarding such wise warnings, the American spiritualists of modern times have been spending their time and energy and wasting their money in the vain hope of gaining the favour of those departed spirits, of learning the mysteries of life and death from them, and of solving the problems which trouble most human minds. Modern spiritualists calim to establish the foundation of a true religion upon the imperfect knowledge derived from the communications of the foolish, deceitful, idiotic, and ignorant earthbound spirits who control the mediums and pretend to know everthing regarding the realms beyond death. The students of Vedânta often wonder how sensible men and women can sit in public seances night after night and listen with great admiration and rapturous attention to the senseless prattle of ignorant spirits who are supposed to control the weak minds of the mediums.

Having spent some time with the mediums of all kinds that exist in America, I wish to say a few words regarding my experience. I have been invited by the spiritualists to speak for them, and to attend their seances. I have accepted their invitations with great pleasrue in order to ake some investigations for my

own satisfaction. I have been many materialized spirits and have spoken with them. I have had long conversations with some who spoke through the trumpets, and have asked them many questions. But I have not found a single spirit in any seance, nor a single medium, who could answer my questions satisfactorily. I have asked them about the life after death, the origin of the soul, the true nature of the soul, its relation to the universal Spirit, etc. Such questions, however, have never been answered by them. On the contrary, on many occasions they have confessed their ignorance, and have said : 'We do not know ; you know better than we can tell you.' Some spirits have often referred to me for my approval of their answers to the questions which they were asked by other sitters. A few years ago I was amused to hear from the spirit-control of a materializing medium in a public 'seance : 'Oh, here is a thinking-box ; what can we say before him ?' This exclamation came from an American Indian spirit. I was sitting next to the husband of the medium, and, as he was friend of mine, I asked him the meaning of such a remark. He said : 'She refers to you.' I inquired : 'Why ?' He replied : 'She thinks you are very wise, and she cannot show her power.' And I am sorry to say that the seance was not successful that evening.

On another occasion I had a long talk with

a spirit, and asked her many questions regarding the mode of living in the spirit world, and her answers to my questions were perfectly idiotic. The spirit said she went to schools and studied books. I asked : 'What books do you read ? Can you mention the name if any book you read ?' 'No,' she said, 'I do not know the names'.

Sometimes, however, I have noticed that telepathically my own thoughts, my own ideas and very expressions were reproduced as perfectly as if I were answering my own questions. I was also pleased to hear the remarks which the spiritualistic mediums made after hearing my discourse on *Reincarnation*. Some of them congratulated me, and said : 'My spirit-guides have taught me exactly what you have explained.' But other mediums did not like the idea of reincarnation at all, because they had not learned it from their spirit-controls.

Supposing all the phenomena of spiritism to be true and genuine, what have the spiritualists gained by these communications, outside of the satisfaction of their idle curiosity ? Have they learned any of the higher truths ? Have they understood any of the laws that govern the spiritual nature of man ? Have they know why human beings come to this earth, and why they go away suddenly ? I have asked many of the mediums, as well as their spirit-guides, and have found that

they do not know anything regarding the origin of the soul. Their answers are always based upon the dogmas of Christian theology which they learned in their childhood in Sunday-schools. They say : 'God creates the soul at the time of birth, and the soul continues to exist forever.' If one asks : 'How do you know that the soul did not exist before the birth of the body?' They do not answer.

Although many of the spirit-manifestations and spirit-communications have been exposed as fraudulent, and many of them can be explained by telepathy and thought-transference, still there are some genuine phenomena which cannot be explained by any other theory than that of the communication of disembodied spirits. On many occasions the audience is fooled by the spirits, some of whom are neither wise nor truthful. In some cases they take the appearance of some other spirit and deceive the sitters. The poor, innocent mediums may not know that such tricks are played upon them by their dishonest spirit-guides. They are not to be held responsible for the fraud in many cases ; the spirits are to be blamed. Therefore, how can we expect to learn the absolute truth from these spiritualists whose controls and guides themselves are ignorant, deceitful, and not wiser than the mediums. Vain is the hope of those spiritualists who expect to know the absolute truth through communications

from earthbound spirits. In India the seekers after the absolute truth do not go to any spiritualistic medium to obtain knowledge of the soul or if God, because they are taught from their childhood that the spirits who do communicate with ordinary mortals through mediums are ignorant and earthbound. They need our help more than they can help us in any way.

These seekers after Truth do not seek wisdom from the Fathers or departed ancestors, because they know that the inhabitants of the spirit world, or heaven, or *pitriloka*, the realm of the Fathers, are not perfect; but that they go there, being bound by desires, to enjoy the fruits of their good works for some time, and at the expiration of that period are forced to come down from that plane to the world;⁶⁴ that eventually they are bound

64. Bâdarâyana in his *Brahmasutra* (3-1-1-27), has mentioned how 'the soul accompanied by the *mukhya Prâna* (chief vital air or spirit), the sense-organs and the mind, and taking with itself nescience (*avidyâ*), moral good or ill-Karman, and the impressions left by its previous existence, leaves its body (after death) and obtains a new body.' In the 3-1-8 *sutra* he says particularly: "*Kritatjaye nushayavan dristasmritibhyam yathetamanevancha*." That is as, Acharya Samkara in his commentary explains it. " * * the souls of those who perform sacrifices, and the like, rise on the road leading through smoke, and so on, to the sphere of the moon, and when they have done with enjoyment (of the fruits of their works) again descend, 'having dwelt there, "*yâvatsampatam* * * *pundra-varante yathetam*,"—return again that way as they came" etc. Again in connection with the *sutra*: "*sabhavyapattirupapattehe*", Acharya Samkara says the method of descending of the souls after quoting the text of the *Upanishad*: "They return again the way they came, to the ether, from the ether to the air. Then the sacrificer having become air becomes smoke, having become smoke he becomes mists, having become mist he becomes a cloud, having become a cloud he rains down." Vide also Max Müller: *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 175-180.

to reincarnate as human beings in order to fulfil the other human desires which are latent in them, and to reap such results of works as are to be obtained on the human plane alone. No individual remaining on the plane of human desires can escape this wheel of birth and rebirth which covers all the stages between the highest heaven on one side and the earthly existence on the other. So long as desires remain in us, we are bound to go through changeful conditions and existences and meet such environments as are subject to change. Those who enter into the heaven of modern spiritualists are similarly subject to the law of Karma or of cause and sequence, and of action and reaction. Being bound by that law, they must remain there until they have reaped the the results of their good deeds and good thoughts. They will then come down to this earth and will be reincarnated again as human beings in order to satisfy their human desires and human tendencies on the human plane. Cycle after cycle the individual souls remanifest themselves on different planes of existence in accordance with their thoughts, desires, and works. They may go to the heaven of the *pitris*, or ancestors, or any other higher realm of the spirits.

Having understood this grand law of Karma, the followers of Vedânta and the seekers after absolute truth in India searched for that subtle path by which the individual

soul can escape the wheel of rebirth in this world, and transcend all laws and all the stages of the phenomenal universe, from the heaven of the spiritualists and ancestor-worshippers up to the highest realm of the *devas* or gods.

The path which leads to the realization of the absolute truth, to the abode of the eternal and unchangeable reality of the universe is different from that which leads to the realm of the fathers, or the heaven of the spiritualists or of other dualistic religions. The entrance into the heaven of the ancestor-worshippers depends upon good and righteous works. It comes as the effect of good thoughts and good deeds. But the performance of good works and good thoughts cannot produce as their result the attainment of Godconsciousness, or that freedom or Divine realization or absolute truth which is the highest ideal of all religions. No amount of good thoughts and good deeds can produce as their effect that which is beyond thoughts and mind, and consequently beyond the reach of their effects ; because Divine realization is not within the realm of psychic phenomena, nor can it be reached by mind, intellect, or sense powers. And the path which leads the individual soul to the realization of the Absolute is neither through righteous works, nor through the belief in departed spirits, nor by the worship of the spirits of ancestors, but through Self-knowledge and the knowledge of the relation

which the individual soul bears to the universal spirit. That path is called in Vedânta *devayâna*, the divine path, or the path which leads to Divinity.⁶⁶ The travellers on this path are those who are the most sincere and earnest seekers after the Absolute, who do not care for phenomena, whether physical or psychic, whose souls soar high above the clouds of desires that cover the light of the spiritual Sun in ordinary mortals. But whose highest aim, loftiest aspiration, and deepest longing of the soul are to realize that unchangeable truth which is beyond mind, beyond intellect, which the fathers in the heavens of the spiritualists cannot reach.

We must go there in order to find the correct solution of all problems concerning life and death. True religion does not depend upon any of the psychical phenomena that are to be seen in seances, nor is it based upon ancestor-worship. Therefore the religion of the Vedânta tells us not to seek Divine wisdom from departed spirits, not to waste our time and energy by going after them, because the result will not be successful. The spiritualists who seek the highest wisdom from communications

66. *Chândogya Upahishad*, 5-10-3-4, and *Brihadâranyaka Upanishad* In the 18th verse of the *Isha Upanishad* we find also : "*Agne naya supathâ râre asmâna*" etc. The word *supathâ* means the *devayâ* which is opposed to *daskina mârga* of the works (*Karmis*), who perform sacrifices with the desire of going to heaven (or to some other higher *Lokas*). In the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* (8-24-25) there is also mentioned the paths, *uttarayâna* and *daksinayâna* : "*Agnirjyotirahaha shuklaha shanmâsâ uttrâyanam ; tatra prayata gacchanti Brahma Brahmano jandha. Dhūmo râtristathâ krishnaha sanmasa daksinayânam ; tatra chandramasam**.*"

with departed spirits are deluded. They do not know the limitations of those earth-bound souls.

Such earthbound souls may take the form of a great wise man or a sage and appear in a seance. They may pretend to give the highest truths, but sensible persons will easily find out how deceitful some of them are. We must be very careful in dealing with the spirits. I have seen people who, after investigating spiritualism and seeing all these phenomena, have lost all faith and have become atheistic in their ideas. The modern spiritualists are like babies in this line of thought. The seekers after Truth in India have searched and gained experience for thousands of years in studying the characters of the earthbound as also of the higher spirits. The Hindus do not allow anyone to become mediumistic. They say that those who go into that condition are committing a great psychological crime, by making their own minds and bodies, which they have got for their own development, subject to the influences of other spirits for the fulfilment of their desires.

We know that mediums are more or less moral and physical wrecks in the end. If spiritualism can enlighten the minds of people as they claim, why do we see that many of these mediums are ignorant and idiotic? They do not understand the moral and spiritual laws that govern our souls. They have lost

the power of self-control. They cannot control the trace-like condition when their animation is suspended and their mind, brain and the whole body are at the mercy of another power outside of themselves.

The will-power of the mediums is weak. Their vital energy, their life-force and their intellectual powers are used by other spirits which have control over them. Once I asked a good materializing medium, how she felt after coming out, the mediumistic condition? She replied: 'I feel as though there were nothing in me, as if all vitality and life had been taken out of me, all empty inside. I cannot think or do anything for some time.' Is not this a pitiable condition? It is for this reason that in India the Hindus do not encourage anyone to become a medium. On the contrary, if they find a person going into a mediumistic condition, they make strong efforts to bring him out of it. These earthbound souls who are trying to get possession of weak-minded mortals are delighted to find anyone who seeks their help.

The genuine phenomena of spiritism may do some good in the way of satisfying the curiosity of certain people, or of bringing the assurance that there is a life after death. They may foretell some petty, trivial events in connection with our business or daily life, but they cannot bring to us the highest wisdom and happiness which come to the soul through

divine communion. These spirits are not angels, as the spiritualists claim, but they are in reality earthbound spirits. Modern spiritualism may encourage the hope of meeting the departed spirits of our friends and relatives, and may bring consolation in the minds of those that doubt their existence. But it cannot give us the realization of the absolute truth or the attainment of Godconsciousness; it cannot lift us above the realm of the fathers or the ancestors who are dwelling in the *pitri-loka*. The aim of the religion of Vedânta, on the contrary, is to make the individual soul realize its own true nature, to bring its reunion with the universal spirit and to transform it into the divine Being, which transcends all the limitations of time and space, all the laws which bind us to this earthly plane. The aim of the religion of Vedânta is to make us realize the eternal truth in this life, and to be perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect. The attainment of Godconsciousness is the highest ideal of Vedânta. It shows the way by which we can reach the ultimate goal of all religions, manifest Divinity in the actions of our daily life, and becoming free from selfishness and independent of physical and mental conditions, how we may live as a living God. For this reason, it is said in Vedânta :

‘You may read the scriptures or repeat scriptural passages day after day : you may offer sacrifices, pray-

ers and invocations to the spirits or angels for help, or repeat scriptural passages day after day ; you may offer sacrifices, prayers and invocations to the spirits or angels for help, or worship the spirits of departed ancestors for wisdom and knowledge ; but so long as you do not realize the true nature of your Self, so long as you do not feel that reunion of the individual soul with the universal Spirit, you shall not attain to spiritual freedom and perfection.⁶⁷

67. "*Kurute Gangā-sāgara-gamanam, vrata-paripālanam athavā dānam ; jñātvihine sarvamanena, muktir na bhavati janmashatena.*"—Sankarāchārya : *Charpatapanjarika-stotram*, 17.

CHAPTER TWELVE

SPIRITUALISM AND ANCESTOR-WORSHIP

What modern spiritualism has taught—Eucharist of the Christians—The ceremony for the spirits—Hindu belief in spirits—The religions of the spiritualists—Frivolance if the mediums and the spirits—Idiotic answers from the spirit—Mediums can be controlled by anyone—Mediumship in India—Realms of the fathers are not permanent—Living on any plane cannot escape the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Modern spiritualism, claiming its supernatural origin, like all the great religions of the world that have come down to us from ancient times with a claim upon being revealed by supernatural beings, has played a most important part in toning down the dogmas of Christian theology, in reforming the religious beliefs of the vast majority of the minds of Western people and in starting fresh questions and investigations into the realms beyond the grave. Within the last fifty years modern spiritualism has succeeded in giving wonderful demonstrations in regard to disembodied spirits after the dissolution of their gross physical forms, and has brought comfort and consolation to the hearts of many who had been suffering from the effects of dry theories of the atheistic and agnostic thinkers of the last century.

Through modern spiritualism have arrived at the belief that there is such a thing as soul which continues to exist after death of this physical body. Modern spiritualism has taught them that these souls, or spirits of the

departed ones are not doomed ~~to~~ suffer eternally, but are situated comfortably and do not forget their relatives and friends. It further teaches that many of these spirits are like guardian angels watching over their beloved ones and struggle hard to help them in every way possible.

Modern spiritualism has taken away that horror of the post-mortem condition of life, and has thus enabled human minds to look at death as the threshold of that wonderful realm, the inhabitants of which enjoy new life, new pleasures and new experiences, having thus established a firm belief in a life after death. Modern spiritualism has claimed to lay foundation of the true religion upon the experiences gained through the communications of those spiritualistic mediums, or under the direction of those wise ones who visit spiritualistic seances, whether private or professional, with a desire to enlighten the minds of the sitters by imparting knowledge of supernatural things.

The attempts of modern spiritualism to establish the foundation of the true religion upon the experiences received through these communications, remind us of the ancient days, when the primitive races struggled hard to see a ray of light in the thick darkness that hid from their sight the realm beyond the threshold of death. In fact, modern spiritualism carries us back to that age when the

uncultured minds of the primitive people wanted to keep up the memory of their departed friends and dead relatives. After seeing the ghostlike apparitions of the departed, they believed in a life after death. They believed that their ancestors were living and they tried to please them by doing such acts as they liked most when they were on this earth in flesh and blood.⁶⁸

Many of these scholars maintain that this kind of ancestor-worship was the beginning of all great religions that claim a supernatural origin. Ancestor-worship, as we all know, means a kind of belief in the spirits of the departed ones, and in the supernatural powers which they possess, as well as in the constant remembrance of those spirits in our minds. Resignation of the will under their direction will rouse the sympathy and kindly feelings for those who are left behind them.

Among the ancient Egyptians we find a belief similar to that of the modern spiritualists. They believed that within the body of human beings there was a kind of being, similar in form with human beings, with similar hands, feet and all other limbs of the body.

68. There was a common belief among the tribes of the Bantu stock of Africa, among the Zulus, the Thonga and other Caffre tribes of the South Africa, the Ngoni of British Central Africa, the Wabondel, the masai, the Suk, the Nandi, the Akikuyu of German and British East Africa, the Dinkas of the Upper Nile, the Betsileo and other tribes of Madagascar, the Iban or Sea Dyaks of Barneo, and even among the Romans and Greeks that "the dead come to life and revisit their old homes in the shape of serpents" and other animal forms.—(Vide J. G. Frazer: *The Golden Bough* (3rd ed.), pt. IV, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Vol. I, pp. 82-107).—*The Publisher*.

It was something like the *double* of the physical man. The counterpart, or *double* that went out of the body and lived, and according to their belief, the life of this *double*, or counterpart depended upon the physical form of the human beings.

If any part of this physical form was injured, the similar part of the *double* or counterpart would also be injured. It is for this reason the Egyptians cared so much for the dead bodies of their ancestors and preserved them by making them into mummies. So, the innumerable tombs and pyramids were built for the purpose of preserving the mummies or the dead bodies as I have mentioned before.⁶⁹ The Egyptians had the belief that so long these physical forms would remain perfect, this *double* would remain

69. A. W. Benn also mentions in this connection : "What we have now to examine is the general condition of popular belief as evinced by the character of the funeral monuments erected in the time of the empire. Our authorities are agreed in stating that the majority of these bear witness to a wide spread and ever-growing faith in immortality, sometimes conveyed under the form of inscriptions, sometimes under that of figured reliefs, sometimes more naively signified by articles placed in the tomb for use in another world 'I am waiting for my husband,' is the inscription placed over his dead wife by one who was, like her, an enfranchised slave. Elsewhere a window 'commends her departed husband to the gods of the underworld, and prays that they will allow his spirit to revisit her in the hours of the night'. 'In death thou art not dead,' are the words deciphered on one mouldering stone. 'No', says a father to a son whom he had lost in Numidia, 'thou hast not gone down to the abode of the Manes but risen to the stars of heaven'. At Doxato, near Philippi in Macedonia, 'a mother has graven on the tomb of her child : We are crushed by a cruel below, but thou hast renewed they being and art dwelling in the Elysian fields'. This conception of the future world as a heavenly and happy abode where human souls are received into the society of the gods, recurred with especial frequency in the Greek epitaphs, but is also met with in Latin-worship countries.'

perfect and intact. The ancient Babylonians had a belief a little different from that of the Egyptians. They preserved the dead bodies, embalmed them, as has been said before, and built tombs over them, putting flowers, wreaths and flags over the graves. This is practised even in these days in Europe and America and is a remnant of the ancestor-worship of the Babylonians. The religion of the Chinese is ancestor-worship. The Parsees of ancient days believed in departed spirits. According to their belief the spirits of the righteous people had been raised to the ranks of archangels and guardian angels. The Parsees used

‘Originally, peculiar to Greece, where it still exists under a slightly altered form, this superstition penetrated into the West at a comparatively early period. Thus in the tombs of Campania alone many hundred skeletons have been found with bronze coins in their mouths, placed there to pay them passage across the Styx ; and explorations at praeneste show that this custom reaches back to the middle of the fourth century B.C. We also learn from Lucian that, in his time, the old animistic beliefs were entertained to the extent of burning or burning the cloths, ornaments, and other appurtenances of deceased persons along with their bodies, under the idea that the owners required them for use in the other world ; and it is so much deposits that our museums of classical antiquity owe the greater part of their contents.’—(Vide *The Greek Philosophers* (1914), pp. 503-504).—*The Publisher*.

69. Vide *Samuel I* Ch. XXVIII, 14.

Rev. A. W. Oxford also says : ‘Since we find the graves of the ancestors of Israel situated on mountains (Numb. XX, 28 ; Josh. XXIV, 30) or connected with places where there stood either a tree or a stone (Gen. XXIII, 17 ; XXXV, 8-20 ; Numb. XX, 1 ; Josh. XXIV, 32), it is impossible to avoid the conclusion to which we are led by many other considerations that the pre-Jehovistic worship was that of ancestors’—*Religious Systems of the World* (1901), pp. 56-57.

He further mentions : ‘From the worship of holy stones and trees arose the *messeba*, or holy pillars, and the *aschera*, or holy poles.

* * The *teraphim*, used apparently, like the ephod, as oracles (Ezek. XXI, 21 ; Hos. III, 4), may have been images of ancestors as they were of the size and shape of a man (Sam. XIX, 13). The theory that they were images of ancestors is supported by Gen. XXXI, 19’.—*Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.—*The Publisher*.

to offer food and sacrifices in the names of the departed fathers and called upon them whenever they wished anything of a supernatural nature.

The sacrifices that are made in the name of God originated from the belief that the departed spirits have hunger and thirst just as much as when they were in flesh and blood ; this offering of food and drink gradually developed into sacrifices.

The communion and offering of thanks and Eucharist of the Christians are only the relics of the ceremonies in connection with ancestor-worship. The chants and praises that were offered by the primitive people to commemorate their ancestors and to describe the heroic deeds and virtues of the departed spirits, gradually transformed and developed into the hymns of praise which we have today.⁷⁰

Jesus the Christ and Mohammed believed in departed spirits and angels, both in good and evil. They received revelations through these angels who were righteous and holy. Amongst the Mohammedans we find they erect mosques and tombs. These graves are regarded as holy places and are visited by pilgrims from time to

70. Prof. Sayace similarly found ancestor-worship and Shamanism (a low form ghost propitiation) at the root of the religion of the ancient Accadians. Similar customs have been traced among the Greeks and Amazulu, among the Hebrews and the Nicaraguans, among ancient English people (Britains), Digger Indians, and the primitive people of the Andaman Islands. (Vide Menzies : *History of Religion*, pp. 111-113).—*The Publisher*.

time. In India the belief in departed spirits played an important part in shaping the religious ideals of the Hindus. It has already been mentioned that in the Vedas we read that the spirits of the fathers were invited to accept the offerings, food and drink at the time of *shrâddha* ceremony.⁷¹ When a person dies, after a fortnight, or a month, all his relatives gather to do good works and perform sacrifices in the name of that departed spirit. They feed the poor, give wealth and make charity etc.

The religion of the spiritualists, whether ancient or modern, cannot describe that state in which their ancestors live. That religion cannot take us beyond that realm, and cannot give us anything beyond the belief that after our death we shall meet our departed friends and live and rejoice with them for ever, and enjoy happiness in that heavenly condition. But this heaven of the ancestor-worshippers and of the modern spiritualists is not the highest heaven. Where the heaven of the ancestor-worshippers and modern spiritualists ends, there begins the foundation of the true religion which leads to the abode of eternal truth, which is beyond all laws, beyond all psychic conditions, all pleasures and comforts of life.

The ancient seers amongst the Hindus said that the fathers cannot get beyond that

71. Vide Notes.

realm, cannot rise on the plane of divinity, nor they understand the divine truth, cannot know that this is impossible for them, and consequently they cannot be the teachers of divine truth." But the modern spiritualists seek wisdom and knowledge of divine things from the disembodied spirits, and try their best to gain favour of the departed ones with the hope that they will learn something about God and the true nature of the soul, and the relation of the individual soul to the universal spirit. They try in vain to lay the foundation of the true religion, depending entirely upon the knowledge gathered from the communications of some foolish, idiotic and earthbound spirits of the dead.

But how can we expect to know the ultimate truth and reality of the universe, the nature of our true self and its relation to God from these spirits who are no better than the mediums themselves? Mediums can be controlled by anyone, so their spirit-controls are simple beings that cannot explain anything of a higher order. Supposing that these spiritualistic seances had been proved to be true, what have the spiritualists learnt from these communications, beyond a kind of satisfaction of idle curiosity and beyond the means of earning a livelihood? Have they learnt any of the higher truths of nature? Have they learnt the true nature of their own selves? Have they understood why their

ancestors live in heaven, and how long they can stay ?

Many times I asked them these questions, but their answers were merely based on those ideas, and those dogmas of Christian theology which they have learnt in their childhood. They believed that the souls were created at the time of their birth and would continue to exist, but they denied the existence of hell-fire. Although many of these spirit manifestations and communications have been explained by telepathy and thought-transference, still there is some genuine phenomena which cannot be explained by any other theory than the theory of departed spirits.

In India, of course, we do not allow our friends to become mediums ; we think it is a disease. If one becomes mediumistic, it is very hard to get out of that condition. We do not allow public seances, because we have more respect for our ancestors and departed friends and we do not wish to make money at the expense of these spirits ; we would rather die of privations than bring down those spirits and ask them for help in the way of living and making money.

The Hindus, of course, do not care so much for these kind of seekers after truth. They do not go to the spiritualistic mediums and to public seances, because they have been taught from their childhood that these spirits who do communicate are but ignorant and earth-

bound, and they need our help more than they can help us. So, the Hindus pray and send good thoughts to them and try to do good acts in their name, so that they would be released from their earthbound condition.

The students of Vedânta do not wish to go to heaven, because they know that heaven is not permanent, and no one can stay there eternally. Heaven is the realm of phenomena. So, if anyone goes to enjoy there pleasures, they are bound to come down, they are forced by their own desires which are already latent in themselves. That is, when they are awakened by their desires, they are forced to come down to the human plane, to reap the results of those acts which were performed on this plane, and to have the fruits of the works which can be obtained on the human plane alone.

In fact, desires are the causes of births and rebirths. All that we are today are the results of our past desires. We are responsible for our destiny. If we have different desires, we will have different fruits and we will go to different planes. Cycle after cycle these individual souls remanifest themselves on different planes of existence. They exist between the highest heaven and the earthly life, reap the results of their works, and fulfil the purposes of life by going to different planes, and by getting the different fruits and results of these works.

Having discovered this grand law of *karma*, the seekers after truth did not stop there. They searched for that path by which the individuals may escape this wheel of rebirth or reincarnation and reach that state from which there is no return. They transcend all phenomena and go beyond the realm of the fathers.

It is said in the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* :

'All the realms beginning with the highest heaven are phenomenal. Inhabitants there are of subject to the laws of cause and effect, of action and reaction ; no one is free from those laws. He alone is free who has transcended phenomena, who, after knowing Truth, has become Truth, and who realizing the supreme Spirit has become one with that Spirit.'⁷³

The path that leads to the heaven of the spiritualists and ancestor-worshippers is called the *pitriyana*, the path of the ancestors, and that is the heaven of the fathers.⁷⁴ But the other path which leads to the realization of truth is different from this path. It is called in Sanskrit *devayâna*,⁷⁵ the divine path, which leads to divinity,—realization of spiri-

73. *Bhagavad Gîtâ*, Ch. VIII, 16.

74. *Pitriyâna* is known as the *dhuma-mârğa*, the dark way of the fathers. In the *Chândogya*, *Brihadâranyaka*, *Katha*, *Prasna* and other *Upanishads*, and in the *Bhagavad Gita* it has been described nicely. But its seed we find often in the hymns of the Rig. Veda used with a sacrificial instead of a funeral connotation : "*Panthâ-manu pravidât 'pitriyânam' dyumadagne samidhano vibhahi*" (RV. v. 2.7), i.e., 'O Agni, you are born of earth and sky (*dyâvâ-prithivî*), * * You know the definite path to the *pitri-loka*, there, be thou so bright as to illumine that path.'—*The Publisher*.

75. Its germ we find in the Rig Veda, the oldest writings of the Hindus. There we get the hymn : "*Param mṛityo anu parehi paniham yaste sva itaro devayânti*." (RV. X, 18.1), i.e., 'O Mṛityu, go back through a different path. Give up the path that leads to the *devas* ('*archir-mârğa*') and go through the way other than this (*pitriyâna* !)'—*The Publisher*.

tual truth and absolute Being. One may go to heaven by doing good works. The entrance into the heaven depends entirely upon the good thoughts and deeds of the individual, but no amount of good thoughts and deeds can produce that which is beyond all thoughts and which is beyond the effects of thoughts and deeds.

The teachers of this path of *devayana* lead us to divinity. They are those who are most sincere and earnest seekers after truth, who care nothing for phenomena whether on the physical or psychic plane, and whose souls soar high above the clouds of desires that cover the light of the spirit-sun in ordinary mortals. The most genuine phenomena of modern spirits may help some in satisfying the curiosity or in bringing a kind of hope of meeting the departed relatives and friends, and a kind of consolation in the hearts of those who are longing to meet their friends and relatives, but beyond that it cannot give the realization of truth or the attainment of Godconsciousness. The aim of true religion is to bring the individual soul into union with the divine spirit, and to make each soul realize that reunion with the spirit, making that soul free from the bondages and desires and longing for pleasures and happiness. He who has attained to that realization is free from ignorance and selfishness and from all other imperfections. He does not go to a spirit for knowledge,

but finds all knowledge within himself. He goes to the fountain-head of all knowledge and drinks deep the water of knowledge from that source. Spirits cannot teach such things. Fathers, or ancestors cannot teach him who has realized his oneness with the supreme Being. Such a soul is emancipated and is perfect as the Father of the universe is perfect. He is a living God upon this earth.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

SPIRITUALISTIC MEDIUMSHIP

Modern spiritualism have opened a new field for scientific investigation—Sceptics and agnostics have no faith—Modern spiritualism has given a death-bow—*Developing Circle*—The method of sittings in the seances—The best results of mediumship—The spirit and the medium—Spirit-control—What the spirits do when they gain control over the mediums—A hypnotic sleep—Trances of the mediums—*Materializing mediumship*—Ectoplasm—Genuine and fraudulent materializations—The process of materialization—Kinds of materializing trance—Is it beneficial for the mortals to develop mediumship—Mediumship does not signify any gift or special talent—Manifestation of the spirits through the mediumistic channels—Mediums lose their power of self-control—A high state of mediumship—Evil effects of mediumistic development—The true Yoga in India.

THE phenomena of modern spiritualism have opened a new field for scientific investigation and have inspired earnest men and women of Europe and America with a desire to communicate with their departed friends and relatives. Some sceptics and agnostics even who had no faith in a life after death have now discovered some truths about future life through the genuine communications of the disembodied spirits. They have learnt that the death of the body is not the end of the soul-life but on the contrary, it is only the threshold of that wonderland where the spirits of the dead continue to exist and enjoy new experience and new pleasure.

Modern spiritualism, as has been said before, has given a deathblow to the hell-fire doctrines and other dogmas of Christian theology as well as to the theory that the souls of men are destined to suffer eternally. It has demon-

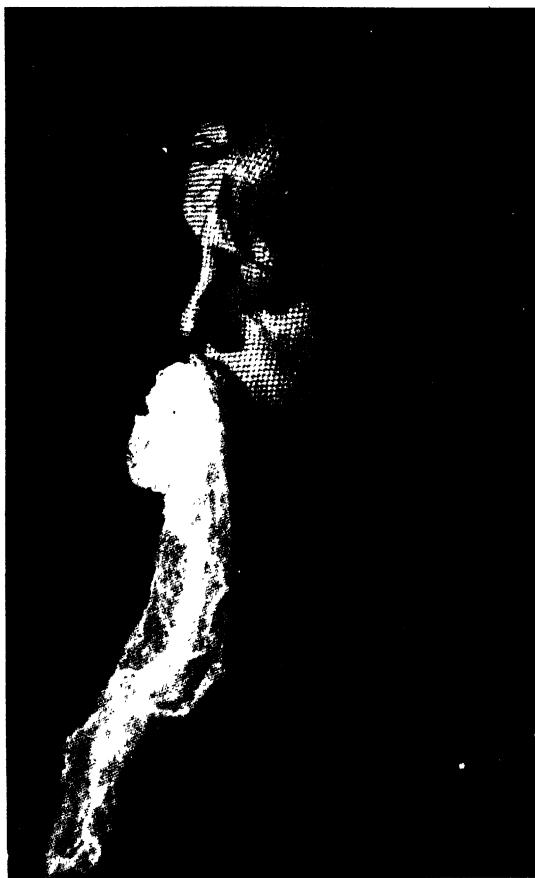
strated the fact that the spirits of our dead friends and relatives are anxious to inform us that they are comforted, and that they take great interest in our mundane affairs and are always ready to direct us in the right path and help us by giving good counsels and protect us from dangers and misfortunes which often threaten us from distance. These and many other beliefs of similar nature have been maintained by the majority of spiritualists who try to communicate with their departed friends by developing mediumistic conditions. We are all familiar with the process of developing mediumship. Those who wish to become mediums seek the company of other friends who have the same desire. They form themselves into a circle which is known as the *developing circle*. They are told by other mediums or their spirit-guides to select a definite room where they should sit as often as possible at least once a week but the sittings promptly at the hour agreed upon because the spirits are just as busy as we are here constantly discharging their duties and obligations. So they must make previous appointments and come exactly at the appointed moment to help in the developing process. It requires at least five or six sittings to magnetize the atmosphere of the room and when it is thoroughly magnetized the developing process of mediumship will begin. The sittings must be held in absolute darkness. As a

dark room is indispensable to a photographer who wishes to develop a negative, so it is absolutely necessary for one who wishes to a medium. Here we should remember that the mediumship is a negative condition of mind and body, which can be easily brought about if the sitters do not think of anything but remain passive and simply hold a receptive attitude as if waiting to get something. And darkness which cuts off physical vision being the negative pole of light will naturally help in quieting the sense activities and bringing them into an absolutely negative state. Soft sweet music is very helpful in this developing process, but the sitters themselves should not be the performers of music because the very effort to sing requires a positive will and activity of the mind. Among the sitters those who are of the negative type, should alternate with those of the positive tendency. During this time the sitters must not think of anything, must not rise any questions but surrender themselves to the will of their invisible controls and calmly wait for the wonderful results of the developing process.

The best results of mediumship will come to those among the sitters who have been able to surrender absolutely their body, mind and will to the will of the spirit-controls. Gradually the spiritual intelligences will control the will, the voluntary powers, and sensory organism of the medium. This control may

be partial or complete. Partial control may be over a certain part of the brain, or any particular organ or any nerve centre or any limb or muscle of the body. This partial control can be divided into two general classes : the one, conscious, the other, unconscious. Each of them again can be subdivided into various other classes in accordance with the phenomena. There are many men and women throughout the country who have some of their mental functions partially under the control of some outside spiritual intelligences from whom they occasionally receive message in the form of certain impressions of which they are not conscious, but they do not lose consciousness of their bodies or of their surroundings. In this conscious and impressional mediumship one may speak or write about things which one does not know or understand. Some of this class are known as inspirational speakers and writers. But the other class includes those mediums who are not conscious of any outside spiritual control which partially influences their minds. They will speak and write not knowing under whose control then they are. Some who partially become unconscious of their bodies and surroundings at the time of speaking or writing. Partial control of the muscles and nerve centres leads to a variety of mediumship. Planchette-writing, Ouija-Board-manipulating, automatic writing, clairvoyance, clairsaudience, these are but some of

the different phenomena of the muscular and neurotic mediumship. When a spirit controls the muscles of the arms, the medium can move heavy weights, When the optic nerves and the retina are controlled, the medium is able to see pictures or images which are presented to their consciousness by their spirit controls. Similarly, when the nervous organism of ear and the auditory nerves are controlled by the spirit, the mediums can hear such sounds which their controls desire them to hear. In the same manner partial control can be over other senses like smell, taste or or touch. Some are conscious while others are unconscious of this control. This partial control generally leads to fuller and more complete control if the sitters continue the developing process. Complete control over the mind and body of the medium is manifested in trance mediumship. Its phenomena are varied and extremely attractive because this kind of mediumship is of a mysterious character. The medium is generally thrown in a state of deep sleep which resembles the hypnotic sleep. Whatever happens in this state the medium is unconscious of. The controlling agents have absolute domination over the physical instrument of the midium. The spirits can use the vocal organs of the medium or any other organ at their will. The will and the volitional powers of the medium are thrown into absolute suspension. Through the body of the medium



Ectoplasm.



Ectoplasm.

the spirits can speak or perform any phenomenon without producing any impression upon the conscious being of the medium. Just as a patient in a hypnotic sleep may talk or walk or eat or dance or do any other act being under the perfect control of the will-power and suggestion of the operator but not remembering any of those acts or words after coming back to normal consciousness, so a trance-medium does not remember about what transpired during the state of trance.

There are many such trance mediums among the spiritualists in every country. This trance mediumship may gradually develop into what is called *Materializing Mediumship*. The medium goes into a state of profound trance. The spirit-controls who are expert in the art of materializing, understand the process. They can draw the vital and magnetic energies out of the medium's physical and mental organisms. They can combine them with the external noncomposite elements and attenuated matter (*ectoplasm*)⁷⁶ and produce phenomena which can be perceived by the sitters.

76. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says; '* * * the witnesses averred that certain people, whom they called 'materializing mediums', had the strange physical gift that they could put forth from their bodies a viscous, gelatinous substance which appeared to differ from every known form of matter in that it could solidify and be used for material purposes, and yet could be reabsorbed, leaving absolutely no trace even upon the clothes which it had traversed in leaving the body.

'This substance was actually touched by some enterprising investigators, who reported that it was elastic and appeared to be sensitive, as though it was really an organic extrusion from the medium's body.'—*The Publisher*.

Of course, there are many fraudulent materializations which have been exposed again and again in America as also in Europe. But there are also genuine materializations, some of which I have seen with my own eyes and have carefully examined in every possible way which I could use under those circumstances. I have been called to come inside the cabinet of a seance where I felt at least twenty hands on my back, some pulling by collar, sash and some putting hands on my back all at the same time. Then one of the spirits spoke : 'Do you think that the medium has been doing all these ?' It was absolutely dark in the cabinet although there was a dim light shaded by a wooden box in a corner of the room. The same voice then said : 'Put your hands on the medium,' and pulling my hands placed them on the midium. And I felt the stiff limbs of the medium whose hands were tied across tightly with a thick cord seated on a rocking chair in an inclined position in a dead trance. I have held the materialized hand of an American Indian spirit which melted away in my hand. I have also seen the genuine materialization of a friend of mine who was a native of Calcutta.

Few people understand the process of materialization.⁷⁷ There have been many instances in every country where spirits have

77. 'The materialization process consists of two factors, one of which is the simple spontaneous secretion and formation of this material for the production of forms, images, and living organs.

materialized themselves without the help of any medium.

The vital and magnetic energies of the medium as also of the sitters give the foundation of all the phenomena that take place in a materializing seance. I have talked with the materializing mediums and have asked them how they felt after the seance was over. Invariably they have answered that as if their whole system was empty, as if there was neither life nor vitality left in them, and as if everything was taken out of their mind and body. They cannot think or cannot show any mental activity in their waking state. Is it not the most pitiable condition? Undoubtedly these trance-mediums may be called martyrs. Through ignorance they sacrifice their vital energy and will-powers, upon the altar of spiritualistic phenomena which ultimately wreck them physically, mentally and morally, and which stop the growth and evolution of their souls. There are other kinds of materializing trance: painting mediums, trumpet mediums and independent slate-writing mediums. There is still another kind of trance-control which was known in olden times as possession or obsession. But it is now recognized as a kind of insanity by the medical practitioners.

* * but whatever may be laws and forces governing materializations, the medium's *psyche* must be brought in as a determining, or at least, as a contributing, factor.' (—B. V. Schrenck Notzing: *Phenomena of Materialization*, p. 282).—*The Publisher*.

All these and various other phenomena of mediumship are now admitted and are scientifically demonstrated facts. Various theories have been formulated to explain these phenomena.⁷⁸ But most of the theories outside of the spiritualistic theory however have proved to be insufficient.

The majority of people who have experienced the phenomena manifested through genuine mediums cannot deny that the disembodied spirits can communicate with the living mortals, can materialize themselves under certain conditions and can perform various other phenomena. Now the question arises whether it is beneficial for the mortals to develop mediumship and become mediums : shall we encourage the spiritualists who develop mediumship ? We have already seen that mediumship means *a receptive or negative state of mind and body*. If a person be positive,

78. 'The most important objective performances of mediumship may be divided into two main groups :

(1) **TELEKINETIC PHENOMENA** : This class comprises every sort of action upon inanimate objects without contact, such as oscillations, the moving of tables (attraction and repulsion), the levitation of objects (raising and suspension), inflations and motions of a curtain, the mechanics of motion connected with the so-called 'apports,' and finally the generation of musical notes and noises at a distance (including raps and other auditory impressions). Also effects upon musical instruments, direct writing—in a word, all forms of action at a distance, no matter whether in their case the manner of production by the mediumistic force was the same.

(2) **TELEPLASTIC PHENOMENA** : This group includes the so-called materialisation phenomena of the spiritists, i.e., the production of forms and materials of organic or even inorganic matter, in accordance with definite conceptions and thought-modes of the medium, which may have their origin in the memory, or in the psychic undercurrents of the medium, in the mentality of one of the witnesses, or (in the spiritistic sense) in forces and intelligences outside the medium.' (—Notzing : *Phenomena of Materialisation*, p. 13).
—The Publisher.

it will be extremely difficult for him or her to become a good medium. Therefore, all persons under all such circumstances cannot develop mediumship. It is true that there are some who are born mediumistic or naturally negative; they can easily throw themselves under the control of any living or disembodied being. Mediumship does not signify any gift or special talent or power from higher spiritual intelligence. Those who think so, are mistaken. Strictly speaking, the word *development* should not be used in connection with mediumship. Because mediumship is *a subjective process of making the mind and body passive, and of surrendering the will and volitional powers to some external influence which controls the organism of the medium*, while development means *a gradual unfolding of the positive powers which are latent in the soul by the natural process of evolution*.

The latter is constructive while the former is destructive. A medium who appears to be inspired in a semi-trance or full trance condition, does not show any power of his or her own which may be called a gift or inspiration. It is not the power of the medium that makes him or her appear as inspired but, on the contrary, will-power and intellectual faculties of the medium are suspended, controlled and kept in abeyance by the controlling spirit who uses the mind and organism which are passively surrendered to the will of the spirit.

It is a gift of the medium to the spirit. Therefore, it cannot be called development.

A medium who becomes absolutely negative or passive both in body and mind becomes subject to all the surrounding influences of earthbound spirits who are constantly seeking opportunity to control and make some victims and thus through ignorance a medium opens a psychic field which is dominated by the will of these earthbound spirits. Many of us have seen scores of spirits who manifest themselves in a single seance, and how eager they seem to manifest. If that door is once opened, it will be difficult to prevent those foreign influences from tormenting and eating up the vital energy of the innocent and foolish medium. I know several cases of persons who were at one time mediumistic but who now suffer terribly from foreign influences and find it hard to overcome them even after constant efforts. Therefore, mediumship under no circumstances is a desirable state, nay, it is vicious to surrender one's own will and also mind and body to the whims of some earthbound spirits. Some if the mediums are tempted by the idea that they may develop the power of seeing or hearing at a distance or things which will happen in future. But they forget that those who have become clairvoyant by the subjective process of mediumship do not and cannot see or hear whatever they desire to see clairvoyantly or hear clairaudiently. They

can see only those things which their controls wish them to see or hear. They are absolutely at the mercy of their controls just as hypnotic subjects are at the mercy of their operator's will and suggestion. It is a well-known fact that the mediums gradually lose their power of self-control. They become more and more nervous, and this nervousness sometimes culminates into nervous prostration. Brain-diseases of various kinds, loss of vital energy and animal magnetism, continuous insanity, and shortened life are the evil effects of mediumship.

A high state of mediumship means therefore a degenerated mental condition on the part of the medium. The mediums generally suffer from loss of memory. They cannot concentrate their minds on one subject for any length of time. They cannot think or reason consecutively. They lose the strength of their will-power and show irritable disposition. They become vain and egoistic and extremely selfish. They become strong in animal passions and animal desires. Some of the mediums become immoral, dishonest and untruthful.

A statistics have shown the 74 per cent of the professional mediums develop abnormal animal passions. Nearly 60 per cent become hysterical, 85 per cent suffer from nervous irritability, 58 per cent develop fraud and dishonesty and 95 per cent show lack of moral

discrimination and courage, while 70 per cent develop vanity and selfishness.

Such are some of the evil effects of mediumistic development. Shall we now wonder why the seers of Truth in India so strongly object to one's becoming medium? Shall we wonder why Vedânta philosophy does not approve of spiritualistic mediumship? The Yogîs in India never allow their students to go into negative or passive condition. They do not deny that we can communicate with the earthbound spirits or departed ancestors, but they know that to become a medium is a destructive process, and not a constructive one. But they have discovered a system called Râja Yoga in which they describe all these wonderful phenomena which can be obtained scientifically without going into a negative state or without surrendering the will and mind to any disembodied spirit.

A Yogî develops his power of clairvoyance and clairaudience by a positive method through the practice of Yoga, concentration and meditation. He can see or hear anything at any time and anywhere. When he attains to superconscious state, all the bright and intelligent spirits come to serve him and obey his commands. He is not a slave to the discarnate spirits but he is a master. A true Yogî is a medium of the supreme universal Spirit which is omnipotent and omniscient, while a spiritualistic medium is under the

control of an earthbound spirit who is ignorant and imperfect. No medium has ever gained spiritual wisdom nor has understood the higher laws which govern our souls through the communication of departed spirits, while a true Yogî who has reached superconscious state has attained perfect knowledge and reached Godconsciousness. He is the ideal of nations. He is like Christ, like Buddha, like Râmakrishna. He attains to perfection even in this life, while a spiritualistic medium losing all self-control sacrifices a great opportunity of unfolding his spiritual nature and remains in the darkness of ignorance and after death joins with their controls and enjoy or suffer according to their thoughts and deeds. A true Yogî, on the other hand, having reached perfection in this life transcends the realm of the departed spirits, goes beyond heaven and attains to omniscience and everlasting bliss.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

AUTOMATIC SLATE-WRITING

Experience in a seance—Automatic writing—Visit to the famous slate-writing medium Mr. Keeler—The writing in the slate by the unseen hand—Electric shock in arms—Writings were in four different languages—Swâmi Yogânanda's hand-writing—A voice came from another seance—Materialized body of Babu Balaram Basu—Questions to him—Voice from Swâmi Yogânanda.

In the year 1899 I was invited to lecture before Spiritualistic Camp Meeting at Lily Dale near Chattaqua in the State of New York, U.S.A. I spoke on *The Religion of Hindus* and on *Reincarnation*. The meeting was held in the Auditorium the sides of which were open and the seats were occupied by those who were interested in spiritualism. I was the speaker on the anniversary day when, according to the number of tickets sold at the gate the attendance was calculated to be seven thousands who came to hear me. Among this vast audience there were mediums of all kinds present at my lecture. After hearing my lectures many of the mediums said that their spirit guides taught the same truths which I was teaching and they extended their courtesy to me by inviting me to their seances. On the 4th of August 1899 I attended a seance where I saw automatic typewriting on a typewriter. Everybody gave the names of their departed friends who might communicate with them. I also gave the name of my departed Gurubhâi 'Jogen.' In reply I received the

name 'Jogen' written with a blue pencil. This aroused my curiosity and I wanted to find out who wrote it.

Next morning on August 5th at 10 o'clock I had the invitation to pay a visit to the famous independent slatewriting medium Mr. Keeler. After a few minutes I went in the sitting room and sat near the window in front of Mr. Keeler on a rocking chair. The sunlight was coming through the window. In the space between us there was a small square table covered with a carpetlike cloth. Mr. Keeler brought out two slates, both sides of which I sponged with my own hands. Then he wiped them with his handkerchief. He then asked me to write some questions addressing the spirit with whom I wished to communicate. I asked him whether I could write my questions in the native tongue of my friend. He replied : 'Yes, you can do so.' Then I wrote in Bengali on a slip of paper, folded it and put it on the top of those two slates between which Mr. Keeler had already placed a small bit of a slate pencil about one half of an inch long. He put his handkerchief loosely around the slates. I held two corners of the slates with both hands and then the medium held the other two corners with his hands. This way the slates were raised above the table in the air between our hands. We sat for a few minutes and chatted a little, for he said that conversation did not interfere with the writing at all. Mr. Keeler

then said : 'I do not know whether your friend will come or not, but I shall do my best.' After a few minutes I asked him whether it was necessary to put my name on the paper. He replied : 'Yes.' He then asked me whether I would write the name of my friend in English or not. I answered in the negative. He replied : 'Perhaps my spirit guide will not be able to call whom you want, as he cannot read your language.' Hearing this I wrote following on another slip of paper in English :

'Jogen, are you here ? Answer my questions' written in Bengali,

and signed my name—SWAMI ABHEDANANDA. Then I folded this slip of paper and placed it on the top of the slates. Holding the slates again between our hands we talked on various subjects. Mr. Keeler asked me whether my departed friend had ever communicated before. I replied : 'Last evening at Mr. Campbell's seance I asked my friend some questions but in reply I received a piece of paper on which his name *Jogen* was written with blue pencil and nothing else. That is all.' Then within a few minutes Mr. Keeler put the slates on the table and wrote with a pencil 'Jogen is here' on one corner of the top slate. He asked me to read it. I read it and said that the name was correct. Again he held two corners of the double slate with both hands and asked me to hold the other

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

W. G. S.

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

Agépas eístaßeíß hómepem
Eíðe revólunr
Ómparós wí wóððoís ómparíy
Eíðe se ßðen wí.

All are with me. I cannot write
more. This is all. Swami

Automatic Slate-writing of Swami Yogananda

two corners as stated above. The slates were nearly six inches above the table suspended in the air between our hands as we sat on either sides of the table with arms stretched. Then I heard the scratching noise of the moving pencil coming from inside of the slates. Mr. Keeler said : 'Do you hear the noise of the pencil ?' I said : 'Yes.' It was over about two seconds. I felt an electric shock in my arms while the pencil was moving. Mr. Keeler said that he also felt a gentle shock. We opened the slates and found the following words written in legible handwriting :

'I find no one here who can answer the questions of this gentleman,'

signed G. C. Then I asked Mr. Keeler who this G. C. was and he replied : 'G. C. is my spirit guide. His full name is George Cristi.' Then Mr. Keeler said : 'Why, your friend is here, he must write.' He wiped the slates and fixed them again as before. He held the slip of paper with questions in his own hands for a few seconds and asked me to do the same. I did so. Then we held the slates again as before. Again I felt a gentle electric shock in my arms after a few minutes and heard the scratching noise of the pencil coming from inside of the double slates. The noise stopped in a few seconds and the result was the slate-writing in four different languages : Sanskrit, Greek, English and Bengali. Seeing the writing Mr. Keeler was very much sur-

prised, for he could not read or write Sanskrit, Greek and Bengali. Here I must mention that at Lily Dale there was not a single person outside myself who could read or write Sanskrit and Bengali. I was also surprised to see that the handwriting in Bengali resembled the handwriting of my friend 'Jogen' (Swâmi Jogânanda) when he was in his earthly body.

I thanked Mr. Keeler for this extraordinary phenomenon which I could not explain and begged of him to give me those slates as I wanted to find out how it was done, by showing the slate-writing to other mediums or spiritualists. Mr. Keeler said that he never had such a slate-writing before. I took the slates and bade him good-bye. Thus ended the seance.

Let me mention here that neither my friend nor myself knew Greek. However, in another seance I was told by the spirit that my friend brought with him the spirit of a Greek philosopher who wrote the Greek verse. At first I did not believe in the truth of this statement but when I showed those lines to the Professor of Greek at Columbia University in New York, he said that this verse was a familiar gem of Plato, that every word was correctly written. He then translated the literal meaning of the verse.

In another seance when I wanted to see Jogen materialized, he replied that he did not like it. But I was surprised to see the spirit

of Babu Balarâm Basu of 57, Râmkânto Bose's Street, Calcutta, fully materialized in the seance of Mrs. Moss at Lily Dale in the state of New York. He wore his familiar white turban on his head as he used to wear it while in his mortal body. But now it was illuminated as it were with tiny electric bulbs all around the folds of his head-dress. My eyes were dazzled to look at this brilliant figure with flowing beard and majestic appearance. He did not speak but answered my questions by nodding his turbaned head. He put his right hand on my head and silently blessed me. At that time I could see the medium Mrs. Moss (who was very stout) sitting unconscious in dead trance on a rocking chair. After blessing me the whole materialized figure of Balarâm Basu melted away in a mistlike white substance and disappeared.⁷⁹

I wondered why he did not speak and on questioning I received the answer that he did not speak because he could not speak before he passed out of his earthly life. This statement corroborated with the fact that before he died Balarâm Basu had suffered from double pneumonia and could not speak for over a week.

79. We have also heard from the Swâmi that he saw the Holy Mother Sâradâ Devî, Swâmi Vivekânanda, Swâmi Adbhutânanda (Lâtu Mahârâj), the Poet Girish Chandra Ghose and Sister Niveditâ in materialized bodies just after the moments of their passing away. In every case, immediately after those psychic visions were over, the Swâmi received the cablegrams from India bearing the sad news of their deaths.—*The Publisher*.

In another seance I heard Jogen's voice in Bengali when he spoke to me through a tin trumpet. He asked me : 'Do you like this country (America) ?' to which I replied : 'Yes.' Then he said : 'I do not like this place, I am going to India to see our Holy Mother.'

Here I must mention that while on earth Jogen served our Holy Mother, the consort of Bhagavân Srî Râmakrishna, with his whole heart and soul. I had also seen in America portrait-painting painted by the invisible hand of a discarnate spirit done in my presence.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

WHAT IS THERE BEYOND THE GRAVE

The Psalms—Jews did not believe in the existence of a soul—The Zoroastrians on soul—Pharisees and Sadducees—Resurrection of the body—Heaven and hell—Last Day of Judgement and Ahura-Mazda—Belief in Messiah—Egyptian heaven—The writings of the Babylonians and Chaldeans—The Greek and Roman histories—The Scandinavian belief in Válfhalla—Different beliefs in heavens—Heavens are projections of our own ideas—The popular belief in the existence of discarnate souls—Death is not an enemy of life—The belief of orthodox Christianity—The conditions of a dying man—Latent powers become stronger at the time of death—Souls contract their powers—Our central life—*Suksma-shariram*—Weight of the psychic body—Attraction of the spirit for his material body—The soul enters the *borderland* after bodily death—Borderland, the state of vibration—The thoughts and ideas of the spirits—Earthbound souls—There is a general law for everybody—Periodicity of the soul-slumber—The material bodies are the results of over thoughts and deeds—The Hindus believe in the existence of the soul from time immemorial—The fraudulent spirits—Spirits borrow powers from the subconscious mind of anybody—The funeral ceremonies of the Hindus are different from that of the Christians—We can help spirits more than they can help us—Good thoughts or prayers help the spirits—Present becomes the seed of the future—The conditions of the souls in their slumbers—Astral shells—Those are the planes which we call heavens—Law of cause and sequence—The realm of thought—How do the spirits see, touch, hear in the world beyond grave—Sleep after death is like the sleep before birth—The second sleep—The souls seek conditions and environments before their births—The occupations may be according to the beliefs—There is none to mould our future—Desires are the causes of our sufferings—The wise ones need not be afraid of death.

WHAT is there beyond the grave? is the question often rises in our minds, and we like to know what will happen to us after we pass out of the body at the time of death. When we read different scriptures of the world, we find that the same question has been discussed and various answers have been received, either through intellect, through conception of the world, or through revelations. Among the answers which have been

handed down to us from time immemorial we find that in the Old Testament when this question arose in the mind of Job, he answered in a negative form. He longed for death, thinking that it would end his mental agony. In Psalms we read :

'Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead ? Shall the dead arise and praisise thee ?'⁸⁰

'In death there is no remembrance of thee ; in the grave who shall give thee thanks ?'⁸¹

'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to this earth ; in that very day his thoughts perish.'⁸²

'The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence.'⁸³

'All things come alike to all : there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked ; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean ; * * * as is the good, so is the sinner.'⁸⁴

'Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, * * * Live joyfully with the wife * * * for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.'

'The dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward ; for the memory of them is forgotten.'⁸⁵

'For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts ; even one thing befalleth them : as the one dieth, so dieth the other ; yet, they have all one breath ; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast.'⁸⁶

'All go unto one place ; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.' 'Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth.'⁸⁷

80. Psalm 88, Verse 10.

81. Psalm 6, Verse 5.

82. Psalm 146, Verse 4.

83. Psalm 115, Verse 17.

84. Ecclesiastes, Ch. 9, Verse 2.

85. Verses 7, 9, 10

86. Verse 5.

87. Ecclesiastes, Ch. III, Verses 19-21.

There are many such passages that create a great deal of confusion in our minds. Which of these answers is true whether after entering into the grave we continue to live, or is it true that we perish in the grave ?

It is believed that Jesus the Christ brought eternal life into light. Of course, he did bring eternal life into light among the Jewish tribes, who did not believe in the life after death, or in the truth that life continues even after it enters into the grave. The Jews of that time, that is, from the ancient times down to the time of the Babylonian Captivity, did not believe in the existence of a soul which could live separately from the body. The Jews had an idea that the breath of life came from Jehovah, and at the time of death it went back to Jehovah. What happens to the beasts, happens also to the saints and to the sinners alike. Those passages which I have quoted, referred to that state of belief, or that state of mind which existed at that time. But during the Babylonian Captivity, which lasted from 586 to 536 B.C., the Jews came in touch with a highly civilized nation, the Zoroastrians or the Parsees from Persia, who believed in the resurrection of soul after death. They believed in a heaven and in a hell, in angels and archangels, and in the last Day of Judgement. All these ideas were unknown to the Jews of ancient times. But some of the Jews accepted that belief, others denied it.

Those among the Jews who accepted that belief in resurrection, in angels, in archangels, were known as the Pharisees. The very word *Pharisee* is a Hebraic form of the word *Parsee*. The Pharisees who lived in Persia, were the followers of Zoroastrianism. But the others were orthodox Jews, who did not accept these new ideas. They considered those ideas as heretical, and they were known as Sadducees. So the Sadducees were the orthodox Jews who did not believe in resurrection. Even in the New Testament we find the mention of a Sadducee who came and questioned whether there was such a thing as resurrection. But the idea of resurrection that we find among the ancient Zoroastrians is different from that of the Christians.

The Zoroastrians believed in the resurrection of the spiritual body, which continues to live after the gross physical body is destroyed. After the third day, according to them, the body is laid in the grave ; The body, according to them, has to be laid up in the grave till the third day after death ; on the morning of the fourth day all souls rise, and this is the spiritual rise of the souls. And those who are righteous, go into the Paradise, the Paradise of good thought, good word and good deed. Those who are not righteous also rise, but they go to hell of evil thought, evil word, and evil deed. There they remain in darkness until the time of the last Day of Judgment, when Ahura Mazda,

the Creator of good, would conquer Ahriman, the Creator of evil. It is said that Ahri-man was at first friendly to Ahura Mazda, but afterwards he rebelled against Ahura Mazda and came down to this earth to take revenge, because he was expelled from the heavens. This Ahriman, by the way, became Satan in Christianity. The conception of Satan is what we find in the Zoroastrian scriptures, known as the Zend-Avesta.⁸⁸ So this Ahriman is the Lord of this world, just as Satan is described as the prince of this world in the fourth Gospel. So he is trying to destroy the good work of the Creator Ahura Mazda, and he has brought sin and death into this world. He is constantly fighting against the works of Ahura Mazda, the Creator of good, and his power will eventually be overcome and conquered by the Creator of good, and then the Lord will create a new world free from the influence or the power of Ahriman. And that is the time when the last Day of Judgment

88. But, in fact, the idea of Satan came first from the Rig-Veda, the most ancient scripture of the Hindus. In the Rig-Veda and even in the Atharva-Veda we find the mention of *pāpmā* (Vide Rig-Veda, X.131.4; Atharva, VI. 93.Z, and the Satapatha-Brāhman, VIII, 4.2). It has been depicted again and again as *māra*, the personified evil *spirit* in the Buddhist literatures. In the Vedic literatures it has been figuratively described as cloud (*megha*) and snake (*ahi*). In the Egyptian Papyrie this snake has been mentioned as an enemy or demon. The Chinese call it dragon. (serpent). The Greeks call it Typhon. But Satan, Pāpa-purusha, Māra are no other than the personifications of the idea of unblessed *mritya* or death, which has again been described in the *Upanishads* as darkness. The Indian philosophy says that desire or passion is *mritya* or darkness, because it entangles men in the fetters of the deceitful world. In the Buddhist literatures the Māra or *mritya* has been called as *tanhā* (*trishnā*).—*The Publisher.*

will come. They also believed in a Messiah. That Messiah will appear in the heavens, in the clouds. His name is Saoshyant and he will help those righteous souls to enter into Paradise and enjoy eternal celestial pleasures. But those who are in the darkness of ignorance will also be forgiven for their sins and will be allowed to enter into the celestial regions. That was the original belief among the Zoroastrians.

Now comparing the Christian belief with that of the Zoroastrians we find how similar the Christian belief is with this old Zoroastrian belief of resurrection, the last Day of Judgment and going into heaven. All these conception existed in Persia long before the time of Christ, and it was noticed and accepted by the Pharisees during that period of Captivity, which lasted, from 586 to 536 B.C. So their conception of resurrection was not absolutely dependent upon the resurrection of the body of Christ. These are all historical facts.

How can we admit that Christ brought the conception of eternal life into light in its literal sense when we know that conception of eternal life existed not only among the Zoroastrians, but also among the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, the Babylonians, the Chinese, the Hindus, and all other ancient nations, like the Romans, the Greeks, the Scandinavians? They all had a belief in eternal life. As early as 12000 B.C. we find such records among the Egyptians. The Egyptians writers

during that period from 12000 to 8000 B.C. recorded that there was a belief in the resurrection of the gross physical body among the ancient Egyptians, and they also believed that the soul of the righteous would go into celestial regions and enjoy all the pleasures that are to be found in those regions. They would have physical forms, almost like the physical form as we have on earth, and that crude idea of the resurrection of the gross physical body was afterwards given up when they came to understand the subtle powers and subtle forces of nature, and when they realized that each human body has its *double*, which is made up of finer elements of matter, etherial. And when their belief became strong in that *double*, which had exactly the same form as the gross physical body had, they gave up the idea of the resurrection of the gross physical body. The writers among old Egyptians who lived in the 5th dynasty, that is, about 3400 years before Christ, emphatically declared, 'The heaven hath thy soul and the earth hath thy body'. It means that the soul belongs to the heaven and the body belongs to the earth. And since that day there arose that idea of preserving the body, because they had another belief that this *double*, which is similar in shape and form with the gross physical body, continues to remain intact so long as the gross physical body is preserved intact. That idea gave rise to the

thought of mummyfying the physical body. That was at the foundation of the practice and belief that if any part or any limb of the physical body was mutilated, that particular part or limb of the *double* would also be mutilated. For that reason, they tried to keep the whole body intact by that peculiar process of mummyfying.

They had also this belief, that the souls of the righteous would go into heaven and would live there with the gods and eat and drink with the gods. They would have their physical body, although consisting of finer particles of matter, like the etherial body, still those bodies were physical and they needed food and drink. For that reason, some of the friends and relatives of the departed ones used to keep food and drink in the grave. That practice was continued for some time. Some of them went so far as to put amulets and charms in the graves. Because they had the belief that the departed friends and relatives needed those charms to counteract the evil influences. It was also written that these souls of the righteous ones would go into heavens and walk in the fields of peace, wearing the celestial apparel of white linen and white sandals. There are canals where they bathe in pleasures. The deepest of pleasures that we have on this earth also exist in the Egyptian heaven.

Then again, when we read the writings of the Babylonians and Chaldeans, we find that the

Chaldeans also had a belief in the resurrection of the corpse, and, for that reason, they embalmed the body and buried it in the grave underground in order to preserve them. And that custom has been handed down to the Christians who bury the dead following the same custom of the ancient Chaldeans and Babylonians. That shows that among the Chaldeans and Babylonians there was a belief in eternal life. And the ideas that we have today, we did not get from the time of Christ, but they existed centuries before the advent of the illustrious Son of Man.

Now, if we read the Greek and Roman histories, there we find that the Greeks had a belief in the Elysian Fields that the souls of the righteous would go into the Elysian Fields and there take up the occupations of their life on earth. There they would meet their friends ; the husband would meet the wife ; parents would meet their children ; and they would continue to live there happily and enjoy all the blessings of life.

The Scandinavians had a belief in Valhalla. They were warriors, fighters, and they carried on their fight in the heavens, in the presence of Odin. There the brave soldiers who had fallen in the battle-field would go and fight with their enemies, and they would get hurt and wounded, but by the miraculous powers of Odin their wounds would be healed and they would take their arms again and fight.

After fighting in the fields, they would hunt a wild boar and kill it and bring it and roast it and have a great banquet and feast. And this process will continue every day throughout eternity. Now, remember that eternity does not mean a thousand years, ten thousand years, a million years, or trillions of years, but it means time without end.

But there are other believers, like the American Indians. They have the happy hunting grounds in the heavens. Then we find among the Mohammedans there is another conception of heaven. They say the souls of the righteous who follow the commandments of Allah would go to their Mohammedan heaven, where there is plenty of shade, rivers of pure water, running rivers of milk, wine, and honey, all running in the heavens. And there are maidens (*houris*) who pour wine into the goblets of the pious ones, and the pious ones drink and enjoy the company of those maidens. They have trees under which they rest and enjoy the taste of the delicious fruits which those trees bear. You know, the Arabs lived in desert, where there was a great need of water and shade. The Arab people wanted water; and that was their idea of heaven, with plenty of shade, delicious fruits, and all the enjoyments that they could imagine on this earth they projected and made a heaven that contained all such delightful things. It is a kind of heaven

which is damp and wet and full of water. But I come from a country where the annual rainfall is nearly five hundred and forty inches. I would not care to go to a wet heaven.

So, from these descriptions what do we learn? That each nation, each tribe, projects its highest ideal of heaven and creates one like a dreamland, and the conception of heaven is the place where we can enjoy all the pleasures without having any break or sorrow or separation. That is, we continue to enjoy these pleasures throughout eternity. Such is their belief. Some people believe that their occupation in heaven will be singing and playing upon the harp, eternal music, constantly singing and listening to the music. There is a verse in a hymn which was used to be sung at one time in the orthodox churches describing the pleasures in heaven :

'Where congregations ne'er break up, and Sabbaths never end.'⁸⁹

Of course, such a heaven will exist for those who believe in such an ideal. There would be a place, or a realm, where those souls who believe and have the same faith in the Lord, will congregate and will sing the praise of their Saviour; and that Saviour might be Jesus the Christ, or Buddha, or a Prophet, or some other Saviour, as among the Hindus. They will go and gather around their ideal, just as satellites whirl around a planet. So these faith-

89. Cf. Swâmi Abhedânanda : *Path of Realization*, pp. 173-180.

full believers will be held together by their faith to the centre of their ideal, which is the Saviour, and he may be Christ or Buddha or any other incarnation of Divinity. So, that would be the heaven and the ideal place where the great righteous saints will go.

But these beliefs that have been handed down to us do not convince us, do not make us feel sure that after the grave we are going into heaven or to eternal perdition. We want to know more about it. We want some proofs. Now the spiritual seance will tell you that the souls, after passing through the grave, enter into various conditions and become angels. They know everything. They can help humanity, their friends and relatives. But that is a question, whether they can help us in any way. Many people believe that they can help us in any way. Many people believe that they can ; others deny it. But they do not deny the existence of the souls after death. They believe in the existence of discarnate souls, but whether they can help us in any way through communications, that is another point, and that point should be understood. Who are the departed ones who communicate with us ? And who can help us ? The popular belief is that, no matter how a man lived his life on this earth, but as soon as he passes through the gates of the grave, he will enter into a realm of activity and will become conscious of everything, will know

all the laws and become perfect; and they have the power to help mankind by giving messages and in various other ways. But those who believe in this kind of ideal do not understand that our life in the future, after death, will be the continuation of this life. Death is not an enemy of this life, as it has been popularly understood in orthodox Christianity.

Orthodox Christianity has made death a terrible enemy of life, that as soon as one has entered into the realm of death, his life is stereotyped, and he is doomed either to enjoy all the pleasures or to go to eternal perdition and suffer for ever. Death is not such an enemy of life. It is only a state.

Now, if we study the condition of a dying man, we can easily understand that it is a stage or passage. What happens to a man who is dying? We find that his body and senses are becoming weak. The sensations are getting dim. The physical body does not move, but his psychical powers are becoming keener and stronger. Some of them would develop perhaps the power of clairvoyance and clairaudience. They would see things from a great distance. They would hear sounds from a distance. Their keen psychic senses would be developed and all the powers ~~that~~^{the} are latent now in our subconscious plane will rise in the conscious plane. Memory will become then stronger. There have been cases

where the dying persons went to a distance in the form of an apparition and gave a message, asking the relatives to take care of their orphan children or continue to do certain things which they have left unfulfilled and unfinished. Such cases have been recorded. In Europe only a few years ago these statistics were kept, giving all the particulars, the time, the hour, and with proper verifications. You will also find in the records and the annals of the Psychological Research Society that have kept such records. What do these records prove? The records prove that there is a power in us that is latent at present, but at the time of death that power becomes stronger. It is also said that the dying persons can communicate with their friends and relatives who have passed out long before their death and who are living in the other world. They can not only communicate with them, but also they can communicate with those who are on this earth. And then after their death they pass through a state; that is, the souls contract their powers that are scattered in the waking state, just as when we go to sleep what we do. Our central life, the source of intelligence, which is centralized in one point, withdraws all the powers that are scattered all over the body, the sense powers; and all these powers are concentrated in that centre, which is like a nucleus. This nucleus holds those powers at the time of sleep, and

at the time of death the same thing happens. It is only a deeper sleep than our ordinary sleep. That is, the soul contracts itself and becomes concentrated into that central nucleus, where the sense-powers, the thought-powers, the reasoning faculties, memory and all other powers are held together by that life-force which is an inherent property of the individual soul. By that individual soul I mean here the thinker, that which thinks, that which feels, that which perceives, and that which knows. Now, that individual soul withdraws his powers just as you have noticed perhaps in the case of a turtle. When a turtle is frightened, what does it do? It withdraws its limbs within the shell. That very illustration had been given in the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* (2-58) :

“*Yadâ samharatechâyam kuar monggâniva sarvasha*” etc.

‘The soul withdraws its limbs inside its shell, just as a turtle when frightened would withdraw its limbs within its shell.’

You can imagine that the process takes place just before the time of death and then that entity, or that thinker, has a subtle form, which is called in Sanskrit ‘*Sukshma-shariram*’. It may be called the spiritual body, the astral body; and that spiritual

91. This nucleus is called the *prâna* or the *Mukhya prâna* (the life-force). ‘As the *prâna* leaves the body it takes with it all it all the sense-powers, which are dependent upon it. The dying man carries with him the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, seizing, moving, speaking, excreting, generating and the power of thinking as well as self-consciousness. All the vital forces and subconscious activities of the organs are also withdrawn when *Prâna* leaves the body.’ Swâmi Abhedânanda : *Self-Knowledge*, p. 63. Cf. Kausitaki Upanishad (III. 4) : “*Sa yadâ asmât sharirât utrâmati sahaivatiai sarvai rutkramati* * *.” —The Publisher.

body goes out of the physical body at the time of death like a mist. It is an imperceptible mist. There are some psychics who have the power to see that mist, and sensitive photographic plates have taken the photographs of that mist, although it is imperceptible to human eyes. And scientific experiments have also proved that the dead if it is placed upon a very sensitive scale and weighed just before death and immediately after death, you will find a marked difference in the weight. The body will lose about one-half or three quarter of an ounce. That three quarter of an ounce is the weight of that mist that goes out of the body, and it has been photographed. There have been many such cases and systematically recorded.

I remember the case of a young girl who was standing beside her dying brother, and she said : 'Mother, mother, look at the mist around the body.' But the mother could not see the mist around the body.

So, you see, that mist is only the inner garment of the soul. It is not the soul. Soul is the centre, that nucleus, and this mist is its finer garment. It is the body, the subtle body we call it, and that subtle body remains after death. Where does it go ? It hovers around the body for a long time. Perhaps, if the body is preserved in the grave, then the attraction of the physical body which it loved so dearly and which he took care of for

so many years with so much love, attracts the soul, or rather the soul clings to that body. For that reason, the Hindu belief is that it is better to destroy the body left dead. For, it releases the soul. But if it is put into the grave, the soul will persist the desire to come and look'at the body, and even after it has passed out for a long time, it has that desire, curiosity, to see what is happening in the grave; and that is a very undesirable state. It makes the soul unhappy. It is painful to see that beautiful body decaying and disintegrating. It is very undesirable that the souls should suffer even in the other world. For that reason, cremation has been considered as the best way of disposing of the body. The sooner it is destroyed, the quicker the soul forgets its existence. So, it. It is better for the soul, to forget the existence of the dead body which is left behind.

Then what happens? The soul, remaining clothed with the finer garment of the subtle body, enters the borderland, where this earth ends and the new spirit-world begins. That is called the *borderland*. It is not a land; there is no line of demarcation in the external space like the horizon. It is the different state of vibration. But it is another dimension. Now we are living in the third dimension, where we have the knowledge of the length, breadth and height. But we do not know the depth. That is the fourth dimension,

and in that fourth dimension these things do not exist, yet it occupies the same space. You imagine that the earth is a hollow form, just as an outline ; it has no solid substance in it. There the souls exist, and they come out from that plane of that dimension to our dimension, and we can see and feel them. It is just like going down to the bottom of the ocean. Our soul's coming on the earth is like going down to the bottom of the ocean.

When you go there, what will you have to do? You will have to put on a diver's suit, which weighs tons. If you do not put it on, you cannot go down. If you have a finer body, you cannot come and remain on this plane. You will go into a different plane, where the vibration will harmonize with your physical form. For that reason, we say that the borderland is not like a place, like a corridor receiving persons from one room to the other behind the wall. It is a different kind of vibration. The same vibration may be continued, but we have not the power to perceive that vibration. If we have the finer senses, we shall be able to see them and feel their existence. For instance, there may be music, a concert, and there are different notes which represent different vibrations of sound, or vibration of air, in a different scale, with different keys. Now all might be combined into a beautiful harmony, but if you want to hear distinctly each sound which is on a

different key, you might be able to be conscious of it. There are different vibrations. Imagine that in this space there are wireless messages that are going on, but one does not interfere with the other because each one has a different vibration. So, each individual soul which passes out of the body takes his own vibration with him. His thoughts, his ideas, all these are nothing but vibrations, and he is the centre radiating all these vibrations constantly; and he takes them with him, and therefore he does not interfere with any other centre of vibration. He carries them in his own realm, and there he remains for some time, until he may go into a state of slumber, which is a sleep state, because the exhaustion after doing all his physical labour and after living on this earth life, is so great that the soul likes to rest and remains in that restful sleep. Nothing can disturb the soul when it enters into that sleep. Even God cannot disturb the sleeping soul. But those who have passed out in anxiety, in sorrow, in suffering, will have a disturbed sleep. They cannot go into a perfect rest. But on account of attachment they dream that their earthly friends and relatives weep, wail and grieve; they are dragged down. They walk, as it were, in sleep, like a somnambulist, a half sleeping, drowsy state. That is why you find many of the manifestations in seances are dreamy, half sleeping, and idiotic. They are dragged

down by the invocations of their friends, and they come and try in their dreams state to help them, but they do not know what they are doing. There are certain souls who have the consciousness, and who retain their consciousness, but they do not know that they are dead. They are in a state of confusion. It requires some time for them to realize that they are dead. They remain some time earthbound. If they have strong attachment for their friends and relatives whom they loved so much on earth, they hover around them, but it causes them great sorrow and suffering when their friends and relatives do not recognize their presence and do not treat them properly. So each soul will make his own environment and his own condition, according to his thoughts and deeds.

Thus we understand that there is not a general law for everybody. Just as two individuals are not equally alike, so two souls will not be in the same state of vibration after death. After entering into that borderland the souls will go into that slumber and remain there indefinitely. That is, some souls will remain longer in that sleep ; others will remain shorter. Those that are strongly attached to immoral and animal desires will not have a long sleep, because they will wake up by their desires, which will sprout in that state. And some will remain earthbound, who will remain in that state and gratify their earthly desires,

and they will perhaps pick out some mediums through whom they can gratify their desires, of drinking and immorality and this is why you find a great many mediums have turned out to be drunken and demoralized. It is not the fault of the mediums. It is the fault of the spirit who is trying to gratify his immoral tendencies and desires through the sense organs of the medium. And for that reason it is very dangerous to allow these spirits to come and take possession of our physical forms and our organs. There is one law about it, and that law should be understood very clearly. We have taken this body as the result of our thought and deed which we had in the past, and we have manufactured this body to rise higher, to gain more experience for ourselves, not for anybody else. Suppose we allow other spirit to come and manifest through us, what have we gained by it? We have sacrificed our opportunity. That is our loss. We may say that we are helping humanity. But we are not helping humanity. We have been put into a hypnotic sleep and left unconscious.

Our organs have been used by somebody else, by some other force. This other force is gaining experience through us, and we are depriving us of our own opportunity for the good of that spirit manifesting through us. That consideration has been overlooked by a great many of those who are interested in

spirit manifestations and in communications with the departed ones. The Hindus are the only people today who from time immemorial have studied the spiritual side and have recorded the result and left their knowledge, which has been handed down to us through generations. There is no other nation in the world which has so perfect a knowledge in these lines as we have in India. For that reason, you will notice that we do not allow our friends to go into that trance or mediumistic condition. Because there is a great danger in it, and if you once open your psychic door you cannot close it very easily. There are some spirits who are fraudulent, who can impersonate as somebody else and fraud the people. Such cases of pretence have been recorded. Some one will appear as a great soul, but in reality it is not. How are you going to distinguish them? Of course, not by their apparent movements, which they can borrow from the subconscious mind of anybody. That discrimination should be made and we must realize the difference between the higher and the lower spirits, and also that whenever we allow them to come to us for any message, we are dragging them to the earthplane. It is not helpful to them. That is why the Hindu people think and believe that it is better in every way to leave these spirits alone, and if they have gone into the slumber, let them rest there, and send them good thought.

The funeral ceremonies among the Hindus are different from those of the Christians. The difference lies in those services for the departed ones are performed, good acts and charitable works are done in the name of the departed ones with the thought that the result of these good works will go to them and thus will release them from their earth-bound condition. We can help the spirits more than they can help us, because they are nearer to our thought realm⁹². If we send them a good thought will come to their help. If we do any good act in their name and if we concentrate our mind with the thought that the result of this good work will go to them, to help them in their onward progress, we are doing good to them. They can give us sometimes certain messages. Some of them and not all, who are advanced, and have understood the law of cause and effect, of action and reaction and who are conscious of the causes, can trace the results.

For instance, you have a certain thought in your mind, and that is the seed of a future result which is bound to come to you. If anyone can read that thought which you have in a seed form, he can tell what will happen in your future. The psychometrists can do that. It is all there in the mind. It is a vibratory state of mind. And that vibratory state can be realized by those who are advanced in psychic planes, who has developed psychic

powers. So we cannot make one rule for everybody. Some will sleep in that slumber for a long time, and those souls who are spiritually advanced, highly developed, will throw off these subtle forms, which are like the sheaths of the soul. These are the limitations. These are the animal desires and tendencies, longing and love for material things. All those are the limitations of the soul. The soul, after sleeping for some time, when it realizes that it is under limitations, discards them; and these discarded shells are sometimes called astral shells, float around. There is no soul in them. They are like thought forms, and these thought forms might be reanimated by the thought of the medium or of any individual. So, you may see some ghosts or elementals. They are all like them. And there are other elementals of lower animal spirits; that is, they have not yet become human beings. They are rising in the process of evolution. These might come, might be perceived after waking from the soul slumber; and then these souls enter into the astral plane. They might have a very peaceful rest and they go into those planes where they can realize the fulfilment of their desires. Those are the planes which we call heavens, where we have fulfilment of our desires, of thoughts and deeds. If we have performed good deeds, those impressions are left there, and those impressions will gradually sprout and produce

the result by the law of cause and sequence. And those results are reaped by the individuals in those different realms which are called heavens, the cherished ideals of the different nations. So you see, those who have a desire to enjoy pleasures like the pleasures in a particular heaven, where there is plenty to eat, drink and to get cool and soothing places, will dream of such a state. Their ideals will be materialized, as it were. The realm of thought-form is like the realm where their thought is realized as truth, just as in a dream. When you dream a dream, you do not know that it is a dream but you know that it is real, and it is a thought-form that you are perceiving. You may look at it, you may touch it, you may hear the sound, but they are all in the realm of thoughts. So, there are no real scenes or trees or different roads and canals except in thought forms. They are like a dreamland, and there the soul remains and enjoys those pleasures because it wanted them. It is the plane for the fulfillment, of our thoughts and desires. After a while when those desire are fulfilled the souls get tired of that condition. Then the soul wants change, it gets out of those conditions. It wants something different. There are many souls in the other realm who are tired or exhausted. They want a more tangible, more sensible or perceptible realization of their ideals and their thoughts.

So they like to go to different planes or realms. Some of them would like to come down on this earth to enjoy more pleasures and develop more powers and they are born and reincarnated. Some of them have the power to choose their parents. Some will go to sleep again.

Now, the sleep after death is like the sleep before the birth then they have a second sleep ; before they come to this plane they go into that sleep, and they gravitate towards the proper environment. If I have a strong desire to be the best artist, and if I do not succeed, or pass away before I fulfil my desire, that desire will remain in me even in that soul-slumber. It will sprout again. Perhaps I will be drawn into the heaven of the artists, where I would have communication and communion with the other artists who are living there, and exchange our thoughts perhaps. Then I will try to manifest that desire again once more on this plane, and I will gravitate under the proper conditions and environments where I will have the physical body which will be the instrument through which I would realize my ideal. That is the process that takes place.

So there is no eternal heaven or eternal place of punishment. If there be any punishment at all, it is like the punishment as we have on the earth plane. That punishment each soul will get. When we desire a thing and

cannot get it, that is hell. That state we may go through on account of strong attachment. A miser, who has formed the habit of handling dollars and cents, enjoys it ; he loves it. Now if he goes into that plane or astral plane, he will carry that desire with him ; but he will have no dollars and cents to handle, and he will be hankering after that, and that will be his punishment. So it is very difficult for us to know exactly what would be the hell or that state of punishment for any individual who has committed something wrong. It is all that we draw towards ourselves by our thoughts and deeds. These dreams might be real for the time being and true, as all dreams are so long as we are dreaming ; but in reality, when compared with eternal time or when compared with the highest standard, they last only for a short period. No heaven is eternal ; no hell is eternal. For that reason it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (8.16) :

“*Abrahmabhuanālokaḥ punarāvaritino'rjuna.*”

‘O Arjuna, none of these heavens from the highest realm of the Creator downward is permanent. The inhabitants thereof are sure to return from them sooner or later.’

They are ephemeral. They do not last throughout eternity in one state. So, this is a progress that the soul makes after entering into the grave. Either he will go to heaven or suffer according to the law of justice. The law of justice is very strict. There is no such thing as forgiveness, but in reality it is

the justice that balances compensation. The well-balanced state of the law of cause and effect is inexorable. 'Whatsoever thou sowest thou shalt reap.' And that law is as strong and as real as you are sitting here now. You may deny it but you cannot get out of it. We may deny through ignorance the force of gravity, but at every step, we could not move and could not even exist on the surface of the earth, if it were not for the force of gravity. A child does not know whether there is such a thing as gravity, and his ignorance does not affect the law in any way. Our childish denial does not make a thing non-existent ; it simply shows that we do not know better. So, this law of cause and sequence, which is called the law of Karma does not wait for widow's tears or orphan's cries. What we have sown we must reap either on this plane or in some other realm. So, after death we may enjoy the pleasures of our thoughts and deeds in heavenly regions.

The occupations may be according to the belief that we will continue to do certain things. It is not true however that all the types of our earthly occupations will be reproduced there. That is not possible. If it were so, then life would not be worth living. Suppose a street cleaner has to clean the streets of heaven throughout eternity, a cook or a seamstress will have to continue to do the same work throughout eternity ; what kind of heaven

would that be ? It would be the opposite place, according to our conception. But there are works, unconscious works, activities of the physical body on the unconscious plane, helping others, trying to bring the souls who are suffering and groping in darkness, to give them a certain light, knowledge. But even that cannot be done without violating a law, because no one can give us anything unless we deserve it. Those souls which deserve any help will receive help. For that reason, it is said that common maxim : 'Heaven helps those who help themselves ;' is absolutely true. Because those who help themselves have made themselves ready for receiving help from the universe. If we have not made ourselves ready to receive help from the universe, the universe does not help us. It depends entirely upon our own worth and attitude. And for that reason the great teachers have always told us to be prepared to receive the help and live on this earth a life that will bring to us peace and happiness, and that will never make us repent, even for a second, because we must feel the responsibility that we have upon our shoulders. By coming on this earth, by living this life, we have taken the whole burden of our responsibility, of our future, and of whatever we are going to do on this earth. Because our character and our future are made by ourselves. There is no any such soul that will mould our future for us. But, in fact, we are

little creators, and as creators in a diminutive form we are making our future, creating our destiny, and building up our character by our thoughts and deeds. And, therefore, we must do it consciously, knowingly, and by understanding the laws that govern our lives, not only on the physical but also on the mental, moral, intellectual, and spiritual planes.

If we understand those laws, then we are opening up vistas of our future progress, we have nothing to be sorry for, when we have nothing to repent, but where there is joy and happiness. Our earthly life would be a series, a continuous chain of pleasure and happiness if we knew the real conditions, real truths that underlie our beings. But these truths are hidden from us because we have not become worthy to know them. We are just playing on the surface, but the time is bound to come for each individual soul when there will be an awakening—a desire to know the real truth. And no soul will be lost. Each soul will attain eventually to the highest knowledge or realization, and enter into that state where there is no birth, no death, no change of any kind, but eternal being, eternal bliss, eternal knowledge. So we must not be afraid of death. Death is nothing but a change. We may throw off this body, but we put on another body if we have such a desire. We also find in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2.13) :

"Dehino'smin yathâ dehe kaumoram youvanam jarâ, tathâ dehântara prâptihi," etc.

'As in our physical body we survive the death of the baby body, of the young body, so we live after throwing off the form of the senile body, as we throw off the old garments and put on new one ;'

So at the time of death, we throw off the physical body, which has served its purpose, and put on a new one, a finer one, more glorious and more lasting. Therefore, the wise ones need not be afraid of death, but always will remember that there is an eternal life for everybody, and no soul will be lost. And those who have attained to the highest spiritual realization will eventually come face to face with the Infinite and enjoy that unending peace and happiness which have been attained by Sri Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Râmakrishna, and by all the other Saviours of the world.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Questions and Answers : Discussions that we were privileged to have with the Swâmi.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. In the realm after death, will the soul continue to evolve into a state of perfection, or is it necessary to gravitate back to the earth and reincarnate ?

Ans. It depends upon the desire of the soul.

Q. If the soul can evolve without coming back, would it not be better not to come back ?

Ans. They cannot get the same experience in the other realm as they would get here in the physical form.

Q. Are there enough bodies for all souls that wish to gravitate back and become reincarnated ?

Ans. Well you have cherish an idea that the bodies are waiting for the souls. That is not correct. The souls manufacture the bodies. The idea that you have expressed is the old belief in transmigration, that the bodies are made ready to receive the migrating souls ; but that does not mean reincarnation. I have explained that in my lecture on *Transmigration*. The soul manufactures the body by obeying the physical laws of evolution.

Q. When the angel was cast out of heaven, did he incarnate ?

Ans. Well, that is a mythological belief. The angel from heaven, you mean, who became Satan ? That is a mythological belief that the angel disobeyed the personal Creator. Then He expelled him and so he fell on this earth. That is a crude kind of explanation, that was given by the primitive minds. There was no actual truth about it. They tried to explain good and evil in nature by that mythology. It was not an actual fact.

Q. You say the dead do not know they are dead ?

Ans. They do not know. It takes a long time for them to realize that they have passed out.

Q. What assurance have we that we are alive ?

Ans. There is no proof. We may call ourselves dead.

Q. How are you going to stop the spirits that are drunk from making the mediums drunk?

Ans. The spirit who has been a drunkard on this earth has carried that desire with him, and he wants to drink, but he cannot find drink there, and he wants to hover around the brothels so he takes possession of medium, or some friend or relative, and drives him to drink, so that he enjoys the flavour of it.

Q. How is the obsessed man going to stop it?

Ans. Well, you would have to dehypnotize him. The medium should be exorcised, that is, the obsession could be cured by a higher spirit of higher development. If you know somebody who has a familiar spirit of higher nature, that higher spirit will drive him out by command, by will-power, but the patient might not have that will-power, he requires freedom from another soul to be cured.

Q. Can a soul remain in one particular physical body indefinitely?

Ans. Yes, it can, if it has understood the laws and lived the life right.

Q. Why did the ancients take out heart and place there a scarab?

Ans. That was their belief. The scarab was the symbol of creation.

Q. You stated that if the body lay in the grave, the soul would suffer when it returned and saw that body. Would not the soul suffer more if the body were burnt?

Ans. It might for a while, if they are conscious that their body is destroyed. It might shock them for a little, but after it is destroyed they would forget. It would be the easiest way to make them forget, because they cannot come and look at it. But if the body is preserved, then that attraction of the body will attract the soul down, and it might occur many times; so there is an advantage in cremation.

Q. What is the shortest time in years that a spirit soul would remain in the dream or unconscious state?

Ans. Our time does not affect them. Our five thousand years might be five seconds to them.

Q. But how long would it be? Ten years?

Ans. Well, that I have already told you.

Q. The Hindus have a way that when somebody dies they put a jar of water and a towel, and they believe that the soul comes for them eight times. Where did that originate?

Ans. I never saw anything like that. There might be some superstitious belief, but we never saw anything like that, that the souls need food, that the souls of the departed ones require nourishment. Some people offer food once a year and our one year may be one day to them; so once a year they offer food in their name, but the poor people get the benefit.

Q. Do we know our friends there?

Ans. Yes, we do.

Q. What is the difference between reincarnation and transmigration?

Ans. Our religion teaches reincarnation, which is a little different from transmigration. Reincarnation is more scientific. It does not teach that we come back from the human plane to the animal bodies indiscriminately simply to gratify our whims.

Q. Do I understand that the soul divides into two parts?

Ans. No, it is what we call the subtle body. It is the body which the soul has manufactured already. It is there now in you and in me; it is not divided, only it takes shelter in the finer spiritual form, and it remains with it while it goes into that slumber and in that astral shell.

Q. What is this mist you were talking about?

Ans. That mist is only the finer elements, like electrons, going out of the body.

Q. Has it anything to do with the soul after death?

Ans. The soul is the centre which contains life, mind, intelligence, and the mist is not that. Mist is only particles of matter amassed together like a cloud, or a vapour.

Q. Is that the ego?

Ans. The ego is in the centre. It is not manifested, but it is in a causal state like a nucleus, like an atom.

Q. What becomes of the ego?

Ans. It is there, only it is then potential, unmanifested.

Q. Is the soul given a power over the physical body?

Ans. Yes, the healing power is in the soul.

APPENDICES

LIFE BEYOND DEATH

APPENDIX A

A SUMMARY OF SWAMI ABHEDANANDA'S SPEECH AT AN ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE PSYCHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY OF CALCUTTA.

In 1925 the anniversary meeting of the Psychical Research Society of Calcutta was held in the Arya Samāj Hall, located at the Cornwallis Street, Calcutta. His Highness Maharaja the late Kameshwar Singh Bahadur of Darbhanga presided over the meeting. It was a distinguished gathering. Many prominent persons like Maharaja Sir Pradyot Kumar Tagore, Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nundy of Cossimbazar, Pandit Shyām Sundar Chakravarty, Editor the Servant (now defunct), and a number of veteran physicians, physicists, and scholars of the great City of Calcutta were present on that occasion. SWAMI ABHEDANANDA was also invited to deliver there a speech on Spiritualism. Long before the hour announced for the meeting the spacious hall was packed up to suffocation.

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA in his flowing ochre-coloured garments entered the hall a few minutes before the meeting. His noble figure, his bright countenance beaming with inward spiritual light, his serenity made a deep impression upon the minds of the audience. It was a sight not to be easily forgotten.

At the outset of the meeting the Late Babu Pijush Kanti Ghosh of the Amrita Bazar Patrika and one of the chief organizers of the meeting, moved a resolution that SWAMI ABHEDANANDA might be requested to become the President of the Psychical Research Society of Calcutta during the coming year. The resolution was unanimously carried. After the delivery of the Presidential Address, the President respectfully requested SWAMI ABHEDANANDA to deliver his speech.

The Swāmi in his speech first gave a brief account of the origin, growth and development of the spiritualistic movement in America, and its gradual spread in other countries of the world. He said that during his long stay in America he came in contact of this movement and some of its leaders well-known in that Continent. Then he very charmingly described his novel experiences as an eye-witness of some famous spiritualistic seances.

There he had the opportunity to receive messages from the spirits of many distinguished persons, such as Prof. William James of Harvard, Prof. Myers and others.

The Swâmi said many things about the various conditions of men after death. After death men have to go through various stages in spirit-life. The man who led here a vicious life must undergo pains and sufferings in a place where absolute darkness reigns in perpetuity. But the case of a man, pious and virtuous, is entirely different.

The Swâmi continued to describe his various experiences of spirit-communications. At one time he was present in a spiritualistic seance, and a very striking event took place there. A music-box, coated with phosphorus at its bottom, was placed on a table within a dark room. The room was kept for holding a spiritualistic seance. Its doors and windows were all tightly shut up. Hardly had the seance begun when the music-box was suddenly and visibly lifted up and gradually touched the ceiling. Then like a flying bird, it began to move along the four walls of that room with the full play of some particular musical tune. At once there was heard a high sound and the box went outside penetrating through the wall. From the outside of the room it began to move in the same way and the flow of the music went on. Then after some fifteen minutes another high sound was heard and the music-box was found in the room. The same tune was still being played. The whole event took only about quarter of an hour.

There happened an incident in another seance which was no less striking. As the Swâmi was listening there to the message of some spirit, he suddenly felt the touch of a number of hands all over his body. But he found that there were no such persons around him. He was a little surprised when he heard the voices of some spirits addressing him : 'Do you think the medium is doing all these things ?'

Then in that very seance there took place another event which was still more surprising. As the Swâmi was coming back from the dark screen to resume his seat, he was surprised to find that his chair was occupied by a lady. It was not at all a human being but the materialized body of some spirit. As soon as he came near her, the spirit got up and shook hands with him. He felt

that her touch was as tangible and warm as that of a living human body. But in a moment the hand of the spirit, held by him, melted away.

The Swâmi said that it was possible for some spirits to appear in materialized form without the help of the mediums and they could directly communicate with all. He also said that he had heard how an independent voice in a seance, held in the house of Sir Alfred Turner addressed him and others present there, with these words : 'Good evening, brother.'

But this power of materializing the body is not possessed by all spirits. Only the spirits advanced in psychic power are able to do this. One thing should be made clear, that though the spirits may assume the materialized bodies, they are not conscious of their material state of existence. So they cannot retain such bodies of theirs for long.

In continuation of his speech, the Swâmi said that the spiritualistic movement had done much towards dispelling many erroneous and superstitious beliefs from the minds of a large number of bigoted and fanatic Christians. It had given a death blow to the queer belief in the confinement of the departed persons under the grave till the last Day of Judgment. The inquisitive minds in America and in other countries no longer believe that the dead are subject to lie beneath the graves and will be resurrected on the Doomsday to go to an unknown place to receive the judgment for their virtues and vices. The unscientific doctrine of eternal hell-fire upheld by the Christian churches is gradually losing its hold on the learned and thinking people in the West. Now it sounds quite ludicrous to all who have thoroughly rationalized their views.

But inspite of all his interest in spiritualistic movement the Swami did not hesitate to expose its demerits and dark sides. He denied its unjust claim that it solved the problems of the religious life of man. It has by no means been helpful to any spiritual aspirant in finding out the way of salvation. It has always proved futile in shaping the religious character of any person. On the contrary, it has misled him. Under the influence of the spiritualistic movement people have been subject to error, and failed to distinguish religion from spiritualism. Spiritualism and religion were things quite contrary in their

very nature. The function of spiritualism is to deal with the ghosts and spirits while religion always inspires and enables man to tear off his bonds of miseries and imperfection and realize his higher Self. Obsession with ghosts and the ghost-world degrades the mind, while contemplation of God helps man to raise himself at last to the plane of life divine. In matters spiritual, the spiritualistic movement never comes to any use. The practice of spirit-communication has brought, in many cases, sad results. Spiritualism never elevates the minds of the mediums either intellectually, or morally, or spiritually. Rather it lowers them to a pitiful state. The constant practice of mediumship weakens the mind, destroys the brain-power and the consequence often is insanity and other incurable diseases. Men and women who regularly sit as mediums in spiritualistic seances become like passive and thoughtless creatures. People who come under the evil and pernicious influence of the evil spirits often become like the toys in their hands. They are gradually deprived of the power of reasoning and of the blessings of human life, and they come to a miserable end. One should not therefore confuse spiritualism with religion. The former may satisfy some of our curiosities ; at best it ensures us of the survival of human soul after death. It cannot do anything higher. But the nature of religion is quite different. The practice of religion leads man to the state of unending peace. Religion enables us to transcend the bonds of repeated births and deaths.

In order to transcend the limits and bonds of earthly life, in order to go beyond ignorance, error and untruth, one has to be fully acquainted with the theory and practice of the Vedântic *Sâdhanâ*, generally known as the system of Yoga. Without the practice of Yoga no person would be able to set himself free from the bonds of repeated births and deaths. The sincere and systematic practice of Yoga alone can enable a man to unveil the mystery of his own being. This alone is the way to solve all the problems of the soul, of its birth and death, and its existence before and after its appearance in human form. It is religion, and not spiritualism that can help us to know the true nature of our own being, which is essentially all-wise, all-pervading, immutable and Divine. The religious history of the world since ages past has been bearing witness to this fact. All the great Seers

of Truth, Prophets and Incarnations, who are regarded today as the living embodiments of the spiritual ideal of mankind, had to go through this path of spiritual practice. Their ceaseless and sincere efforts made them free for ever from untruth, ignorance and illusion. In attaining to this state of Self-realization they had overcome all sorrows, sufferings and miseries.

It is wrongly believed by many people that the teachings of the Vedanta make the human life dry and monotonous and that we become pessimists. Vedânta, they say, is all rationality. Yes, Vedânta supports nothing unreasonable. Nor does it indulge in anything without the process of rational analysis. For, without reason there is no other way to distinguish truth from untruth. This process should be applied in order to know the highest Truth ; and we cannot help this. But it is far from true that the practice of *Sâdhanâ* as enjoined by the Vedânta makes our life dry and pessimistic. On the contrary, it sweetens life with ineffable joy. It leads man to the perennial source of unbound happiness. The teachings of Vedânta inspire and guide us to realize our oneness and identity with the Infinite. This is the highest goal of all religions. Whosoever realizes this state attains to eternal Bliss even in this life.

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

WE GIVE HERE, FROM OUR MEMORY, SOME OF DISCUSSIONS THAT WE WERE PRIVILEGED TO HAVE WITH THE SWAMI.

Q. Swamiji, what becomes of the souls immediately before and after death ?

Ans. The soul immediately before death contracts and withdraws all sense-powers gradually. The physical senses grow dimmer and dimmer as a flickering candle-flame gradually approaches utter extinction ; but the senses and powers grow keen and strong. The soul just before leaving the body lives in an unconscious state like slumber and in that state the astral or spiritual body passes out like a mist.

Q. Then the condition of the souls beyond their graves is awful indeed ?

Ans. Yes. The earthbound spirits suffer much. They do not know that they are dead. In that slumber state the souls carry a concentrated record of their entire lives. When the soul wakes from the sleep they enter into an astral plane. This astral plane is nothing but the projections of the souls' own ideas. Their dimensions are in vibrations. The disembodied souls find their ideas realized in that astral plane. They sleep, but their period of sleeps vary.

Q. Do they not enter then a lonely and foreign realm ?

Ans. Yes. Just to make it clear, let us take an example. Suppose you are an inhabitant of a large and thickly populated city like Calcutta. There happens a terrible earthquake in a dead dark night resulting in a total devastation of the whole city. The houses fall to pieces and the whole city appears like a vast desert enveloped with deep darkness. Then if you are allowed to move and walk freely with your eyes blind-fold, what will be your condition ? Just imagine. Such is the wretched condition of the earthbound spirits after death.

Q. Is it the same condition of all the spirits ?

Ans. No. Ordinary earthbound souls only suffer from it. The case of the virtuous souls is entirely different.

They move easily and freely, and can see their ways with the light of their own knowledge and purity.

Q. Swâmiiji, may we ask you again where the souls really go after death ?

Ans. They go where they already are. Where do you stay when you fall asleep ? You then stay in the mind. After death the souls need not go to any other place. They continue to stay on in the same mental plane just as we do in our state of sleep or dream (*svapna*). The souls then live in the mental plane or *manomaya jagat*. They move and do everything mentally then in that state. Nothing of material plane remains for them. The bodies in which they dwell at that time are subtle and are made of seventeen subtle elements. They are : Five *prânas*, five *karmendriyas*, five *jnanendriyas*, the *manas* and the *buddhi*. The composite subtle body of seventeen elements is called by the Samkhya and other Hindu philosophies, *sukhsma-shariram*.

Q. How do the prayers and good thoughts of the living become helpful to the souls departed ?

Ans. I have already said that just after death the souls cannot realize themselves detached from their previous material bodies. They remain in a swoon and are unconscious immediately after death. In that condition prayers of any kind by the well-wishers help the spirits a good deal. Good thoughts from the relatives and nearest and dearest ones bring an alleviating reaction in their mental planes. Thus they create a certain vibration in their stupified condition of mind, restore their veiled consciousness, and thereby the souls come to know that really they are not in their material bodies. The weeping and wailing of their relatives afflict them with pains and thereby some are dragged down from their astral planes. But good prayers bring back their consciousness and then they try to cross the *borderland*. This borderland in vibration is like a narrow river of ether which can be compared to a neutral zone. It has been called by the Hindus the *Vaitarani*, by the Parsis (Zoroastrians) *Chinnat-bridge* and *Sirat* by the Mohammedans.

Ordinary or earthbound spirits cannot cross this borderland easily. They generally go to a region where

prevails permanent darkness. This dark astral plane has been described by the *Upanishads* as :

"Asurya nama te loka andhena tamasavritaha ; tamaste pretyabhi-gacchanti ye ke chatmahano janaha."—Isha Upanishad, 1.3.

'There are the regions of permanent darkness ; the light of the sun or other luminaries is never seen there. Those, that have not realized their true Self or do not strive for Self-realization, must go to that dark region after death.'

The sun, the moon and the stars cannot shine in the spirit-world as they belong to this material world of ours. There is no room for any earthly or material thing in that subtle world beyond death.

Q. Then the condition of the earthbound spirits is worse after death ?

Ans. Yes. In the case of the earthbound souls desires are not fulfilled and so their sufferings become worse and worse. They dig their own graves. All desires for material enjoyment then reach their most acute form. The souls then suffer from the burning flames of those unfulfilled passions.

In fact, what you will sow you will reap. The desires remain in the form of impressions or *samaskâras*. The mind is the receptacle or rather the bundle of the *samaskaras*. The death of the body cannot destroy the *samskâras*. After death they remain as the seed-forms in the mind.

Q. Swâmiji, what is meant by the *double* or astral body ?

Ans. Double or astral body is nothing but an exact counterpart of the physical body. The astral body leaves or goes out of the physical body at the time of death, and when it leaves the latter there remains still a slender thread or cord of astral or vapourlike substance. Finally it also melts away. The soul remains then in a state of coma resembling with the condition of an unborn child in the mother's womb.

Q. Is it possible to communicate with the dead ?

Ans. Certainly. Generally the half-awakened souls manifest themselves in spiritualistic circles through the channel of the medium. Some are dragged down from their peaceful sleeps to answer our selfish calls, and some themselves, are eager enough to communicate. They appear in a dreamy state. Sometimes it has been found that, seeing the mediummistic channel open, they lose their self-control.

Q. Can the disembodied spirits take any material form ?

Ans. Yes, they can. Astral shells or astral corpses of the departed spirits may be materialized temporarily by means of the vitality of the mediums in their unconscious state. They appear in shadowy forms, move and even speak sometimes. Men who have psychic power can see these shadowy forms of the spirits. Experiments have been made by the spiritualists many a time, proving that the psychical corpses can be aroused into apparent life by a strong mediumistic current.

Q. Do the departed souls incarnate again on earth ?

Ans. Yes. Until and unless they are able to break the bonds of desires and transcend the cycles of birth and death, they are born again and again on earth. Sooner or later the departed souls feel a strong desire to manifest themselves again in new life. The seeds of their unsatisfied desires compel them to be born again on earth. So they select their fitting parents, circumstances and surroundings before being born. They fall again into a state of soul-slumber, and die on the astral plane as they did before on earth. By the same cyclic process of evolution and involution they are born in a state of partial slumber. They awake gradually from the dream-like states to the consciousness of the earth-plane.

Q. Is it not good to culture spiritualism for the knowledge of the world beyond death ?

Ans. It is not good, I think, for those who really aspire to realize the supreme knowledge of the *Atman*. It is our aim of life not to acquire knowledge of things fleeting and unreal, but to reach the goal which is the absolute Truth and Blessedness. Spirit-worlds may be true from the empirical point of view, but really they are nothing but the imageries of the human minds. Spirits are unborn and uncreated and are immortal in their nature. Birth and death, coming and passing are merely the appearance. Only through the veil of ignorance a man thinks himself to be dead or born. When his darkness of ignorance is dispelled by the self-effulgent radiance of the *Atman*, he realizes himself as the immortal Bliss. Spiritualism does not help us to transcend the cycles of death and birth ; the knowledge of the Absolute alone can make us free from it.

APPENDIX C

WE REPRODUCE HERE SOME REPORTS OF THE SPEECHES BY THE SWAMI ON THIS SUBJECT PUBLISHED IN VARIOUS JOURNALS OF AMERICA.

I

FREE RELIGIOUS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA IN SESSION

Intellectual leaders from all over New England present—Opening Address by Dr. Janes—‘Conception of Immortality’ the topic of this morning.

‘large and typically Bostonian audience filled the floor and first gallery of the Hollis Street Theatre this morning, at the 32nd annual convention of the Free Religious Association of America, to which delegates have come from many parts of the continent, but most of the members of which live in this city and vicinity. A glance through the audience showed that a good portion of the intellectual leaders of New England were present.

Former President. Thomas Wentworth Higginson being absent on account of illness, Dr. Lewis G. Janes of Cambridge, the newly elected president, occupied the Chair at the morning session of the convention, and made a brief opening address, saying that having attended the first meeting of the Free Religious Association as a young man, 32 years ago, he had been profoundly influenced by it, and his whole life changed. He said that he would like to see the whole world come under the banner of free religion and the sects cease to strive against each other. ‘I would like,’ he continued, ‘to see political reforms brought about. When I heard Emerson and Lucretia Mott speak at the initial meeting I thought the presidency of this Society was a position of greater honour than the presidency of the United States; and there has been nothing in the recent conduct of the present incumbent of the latter office to modify my youthful opinion.’

‘The subject of the morning conference was *The Conception of Immortality*, and the first paper, discussing the philosophical argument, was presented by PROF. JOSIAH ROYCE, Ph. D. of Harvard University. His thesis was a scholarly argument for immortality from the standpoint of a mental philosopher.

‘We have no empirical foundation for a belief,’ said he, ‘that so great an ill as death is to be compensated by a resurrection. Life is full of ills that seem unaccountable, as far as our direct human observation can go. The Teutonic Socrates said that a future life must be believed, if at all, because of its reasonableness in view of what is known and supposed of divine attributes. Certain arguments are becoming humorous from the Society of Psychical Research, but I cannot accept as conclusive the evidence thus collected. Neither the newspapers nor the records of the Society just named have attempted authentic reports of happenings in the world of spirits. The investigators are honest, but the supply of connected

facts is limited, and precludes the possibility of deducing broad scientific conclusions.

'That the dead exist, and that they hold communication with the living, is incapable of being demonstrated to the world. If the supposed communications are such as could not come from living man, they are naturally ascribed to subjective hallucinations. If, on the other hand, the communications are such as might come from living men, imparting knowledge in the possession of the world, they are to be explained by telepathy, or some kind of natural influence. Even if spiritual communications could be definitely proved, it would only leave us where savage folklore leaves its votaries, in the assurance that some souls exist somehow—not a specially valuable belief.'

'PROF. ROYCE then proceeded to say what he considers a solid philosophical basis for a full belief in immortality, but in language rather too technical to be appreciated by those not well grounded in psychology. But he made a stout defence of his statement that, as he expressed it, *the ethical individual is not limited to the present from of consciousness.*'

'The argument from psychical research was presented by Prof. James H. Hyslop of Columbia University, the head of the American Society of Psychical Research.

'Our researches have been handicapped,' said the speaker, 'by erotic and inane deceptions perpetrated upon willing dupes by Spiritualism, and our Society has been called in question because we undertake to apply scientific methods to the investigation of psychical problems. But after a period of struggle for existence the Society of Psychical Research now looks the materialists boldly in the face, challenging them to battle. Our method is the only rational one that can secure the results desired. The business of the philosophers is only to classify and arrange the results we can obtain. All the known facts of physiology seem to point toward the conclusion that consciousness is merely a result of physiological processes, and we must have something more than *a priori* reasoning to disprove the arguments of materialists, among whom I once numbered myself.

'Philosophers since the time of Kant cannot well accept any knowledge not based on some form of experience, and it is this experience that our society is engaged in collecting. Even if we receive as genuine all the table-tipping, clairvoyance and the like, it would not even prove the existence of soul, much less its immortality. We must have full knowledge of conditions of isolation in apparent cases of communication from spirits, and know that there is a survival of personal identity in the manifestation which is said to have been received. There must be something learnt by the subject that could not have been known naturally.

'When I consider the sins and general *curse* of humanity, I wonder that men are allowed to live as long as they do. Why would it not be fitting to cleanse the universe by a general and sweeping annihilation? The only objection I would make to this is that it would be too great a reward for the hypocrisy and deceit of some men.

'I do not hesitate to accept the spiritualistic theory, even if it should let loose a madhouse upon the world. I only insist upon the

application of scientific methods to the study and settlement of the great problems of immortality.

'A brief recess gave the treasurer an opportunity to canvass the audience for funds, and then Miss Anna Boynton Thompson of Boston explained the views of the transcendentalists upon immortality.

'The transcendental theory,' said Miss Thompson, 'considers the consciousness as the gateway of knowledge. God, the uncaused first cause, is freedom, and we are each created in His image; immortality is quantitative, and lies in the power of every one who wills to have it, working for right for the sake of right. The individuality working the right is as really immortal as God's life, of which it is a part. Only when I will do right for its own sake, do I really exist, and in that case my existence is eternal.

'I believe that the ego is God uncreated, and that itself creates seeing the divine will in its constant progress, doing the will actualizing the divine vision. Be ye yourselves the Christ, and ye are yourselves immortal life.'

'Because of the lateness of the hour, President Janes omitted his paper, which included the scientific argument, and introduced as the last speaker, the SWAMI ABHEDANANDA of India, now working in the United States as a Hindu missionary.

'The Swami said that the doctrine of immortality had its origin among the Aryans of ancient India. He quoted from the Book of Ecclesiastes to show that Solomon had no faith in a future life after death and said that the world is still full of agnostics, who deny that after a man dies he can live again. The miraculous resurrection of a single person no longer is enough to make a living hope in a future life. Those who believe in that resurrection may deny hope for the future to us who doubt it, but their words no longer strongly influence the world'

'The impenetrable wall that seems to surround those who would look beyond the grave is simply the idea men have that the soul is produced by the body and that when the body is destroyed, the soul is also ended. The Hindus believe that each individual soul has existed before, meaning by soul the subtle body, or ego, the germ of life. When this germ has finished its work in one physical body, it drops the old envelope and manufactures a new one. This ego is imperishable. As to death, we may say there is no annihilation in the universe, but it is full of change, and the subtle body continues to change through evolution, until the purposes of life are fulfilled, perfection attained, and all the inherent powers fully developed. We understand that this subtle body is not our true nature but a receptacle for that nature, a spirit which forms a part of the universal Spirit, like a circle whose centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere. This inclusive Spirit is the ultimate, absolute, God, worshipped in different parts of the world as Allah, Christ, Buddha, or Father in heaven. He is free from all changes, and subject to no limitations. This Spirit fills all the universe, and embraces all life, in the source of all actions.

'The object of all religions is the same, the attainment of immortality, the cultivation of the soul. Christianity misses its ideal when it turns to dogmas and beliefs, instead of pursuing soul culture.'

II

NEW ENGLAND CREMATION

THEY LISTEN TO TALKS BY JOHN STORER
COBB, THEIR FOUNDER, AND BY
SWAMI ABHEDANANDA :

(A)

A public meeting was held under the auspices of the New England Cremation Society yesterday afternoon in Wesleyan Hall. Harrison Otis Apthorp, President of the Society, presided, and brief addresses were made by Rev. Paul Revere Forthingham of New Bedford, Rev. Samuel M. Crothers of Cambridge, the SWAMI ABHEDANANDA of India, who spoke on *Cremation in India*, John Storer Cobb, founder of the Society, and others.

'Rev. Mr. Forthingham spoke of the great antiquity of the practice of cremation. It was formerly a sort of religious ceremony, and very sacred, and a distinguished honour to the bodies of the dead to be burned. There had always been something deeply religious about flame, and even now there was something sacred about the use of fire. The practice of cremation strengthened spirituality in man, in his opinion, for it emphasized the distinction between the spirit and the body.'

Rev. Samuel M. Crothers of Cambridge also spoke strongly in favour of cremation * * *.

'The SWAMI ABHEDANANDA told of the practice of cremation in his country, which, he said, dated from prehistoric times. It was deemed the most healthful way of disposing of the bodies of the dead. It was believed by the Parsees that the body should be destroyed as soon as possible after the spirit had left it. The Hindoos believed the spirit was entirely separate from the body. The spirit was the real man, and the body was but the shell in which it was kept.'

—BOSTON JOURNAL, JUNE 2, 1899.

(B)

'A native Hindoo, SWAMI ABHEDANANDA of India, a young man with an intelligent face and a command of the choicest English, spoke most interestingly of cremation in India, saying that it dated from prehistoric times. There was no need of cremation societies. The Hindoos know this way of disposing of the dead.

'Unlike the Egyptians who associated the body and soul so closely that they could not conceive of the one existing without the other, and so were driven to the embalming of the one to make sure the happy existence of the other. The Hindoos held the higher view that the soul was everything and the body nothing—only the house in which the man lived and to be reduced to nothingness as soon as possible after its immortal tenant had gone out of it.'

—BOSTON TRAVELLER, JUNE 2, 1899.

III

DELIVERED IN THE OUTLOOK

CLUB, NEW YORK

We think that at birth, the soul comes from God. The Hindu believes that the soul exists before and after the death of the body. This belief solves many problems of life; it explains all the inequalities that we often find. Happiness and misery are a result of past incarnation. We create our own destiny. The soul takes its future form according to its desires. The desire to see produced the eye, to hear the ear. The soul must reach perfection sooner or later, for no soul can be lost. Heaven and hell are mental conditions, and the ultimate goal is the manifestation of divinity. The word 'Buddha' means enlightened, and there are many types of Buddhas. To work and not think of the results is the highest form of action. Love, when true, seeks no return.'

—DAILY EVENING ITEM, LYNN : MASS., TUESDAY, APRIL 10, 1900.

IV

PURE IDEALISM THE BASIS :

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA SPEAKS ON

Indian Mystics and their methods of attaining perfection demonstrated

The Swami said that '* * the human soul was immortal being an emanation from the Infinite Spirit, and always had existed and always will. The immortal must be so at the beginning as well as at the end. No religion was of any use that did not teach the past immortality of the soul, as well as the future.

'The present state of the spirit depended on the past, and the future upon the present. We take character with us through death, and nothing else. That character was made up of every act and thought, that inevitably react upon the doer. 'What thou thinkest, that shalt thou become.' This was the great law of *Karma*, which was merely the scientific law of causation * *'.

—THE MALL AND EMPIRE, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1905.

V

EAST INDIAN TALKS ON SPIRITUALISM

FROM HIS OWN EXPERIENCE

'*Spiritualistic Mediumship* was the subject of a lecture delivered yesterday by SWAMI ABHEDANANDA of India, at the Vedanta Society's room, 62 West Seventy-first Street. He said that he had seen materializations and had received spirit messages both in Sanskrit and Bengali about which he believed there was no mistake.

'Admitting the fundamental facts of Spiritualism, he denounced the practice of mediumship, declaring that the negative state essential to it led in many cases to loss of memory, loss of the power of reasoning and self-control, to the dulling of the moral sense and not infrequently to insanity. For this reason in India from ancient times the Yogis and spiritual teachers have always guarded their pupils and disciples from becoming mediums and have instead taught them how they could develop the psychic powers which would make them masters of themselves and the realm of spirits.'

—NEW YORK HERALD, FEBRUARY 13, 1905.

VI

'There is some good in Spiritualism,' said the Swami. 'Why did we come into life all of a sudden if we did not live before and will not live after life leaves the human body?' he asked.

'Treating the question of immortality scientifically, the Swami declared: *Science shows something cannot come out of nothing. there, life must have existed in substance before it came into the human body.*'

—PITTSBURGH POST, JANUARY 26, 1907.

VII

'Vedanta, it is claimed, explains the fundamental principles of Spiritualism, tells us how the soul exists after death, what kind of soul can communicate with us, and how the earth-born souls, being subject to the law of *Karma* and causation, reincarnate on this earth, taking human form again and again.'

—CHICAGO INTER OCEAN, OCTOBER 26, 1908.

VIII

WEST CORNWALL SWAMI DISCUSSES HIS PHILOSOPHY :

* * What is the Vedanta theory of the transmigration of the soul? Let me say first that we believe that the souls of the departed takes up the new life in human bodies, as opposed to the Platonic view that the soul sometimes takes up the new existence in the body of an animal.

'The Indian version of transmigration is that each soul is bound to receive its body as a natural consequence of its former deeds and misdeeds, and not to have free choice of its lot. This is the law of cause and effect. The universal law of cause and effect, let me add, was discovered by the great thinkers of India. They gave it the Sanskrit term *Karma*. This law of *Karma* has become one of the fundamental truths of modern science. Scientists gave it different names. They variously term it the law of causation, the law of compensation, the law of action and reaction, etc. But they all have the same idea in mind, namely that every cause is productive of a corresponding result, that every action is productive of a corresponding result, that every action is productive of a corresponding reaction.

'The law of *Karma* controls our birth and re-birth. Our belief is that the parents do not create the souls. They are merely the channels through which the migrating souls receive their material forms. The souls come with their desires.

'When death comes, the soul does not manifest itself until the surroundings become favourable for a manifestation.

'Our belief that the soul takes up new life in the human body, and never in the body of an animal, makes our theory one of re-incarnation rather than of mere transmigration. Why should the soul choose to become an animal? We argue, by the process of evolution the human soul has already passed through different stages of animal-dom. It would not want to revert to animalism. It is unscientific to think otherwise.

'A noted professor has said of the theory of transmigration : *None but hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of inherent absurdity. Like the doctrine of evolution itself that of transmigration has its roots in the world of reality.*

—WATERBUY HERALD, 'CONN.' (Editorial Sec.), OCT. 14, 1917.

IX

THE SWAMI ARRIVES :

'Five miles from West Cornwall the SWAMI ABHEDANANDA, Hindu philosopher and well-known writer on Vedantism, holds forth. * *

'I am a teacher of philosophy,' said the Swami, 'the Vedanta philosophy, or religion, as you choose to call it. The fundamental principle if this school of thought is a belief in the immortality of the soul. After the death of the body, the soul continues to live, but for sometime it goes neither to heaven nor to hell. It gravitates. Take the souls if the soldiers who die on the battle-fields. For the most part these men are so suddenly killed that they are not conscious of their corporeal non-existence. For a time their souls remain on different planes of the spiritual world. Then, according to the worth that each man displayed on earth, his soul is dealt with. The worthy are rewarded, the unworthy punished. But there is no eternal damnation. We consider such ideas foolish. Not only shall we all be saved, but eventually we shall all, like God, be perfect.

We believe that there is a heaven to meet the desires of each and every one of us ; in other words, that there is a musician's heaven, an artists' heaven, a heaven for the mechanically inclined, etc. When I speak of heaven and hell, I do not speak of them as being definite destinations of the soul. Heaven and hell are merely mental conditions. Suppose, for instance, a man were a miser all of his life. After death his punishment would be a continuation of his earthly longing for gold, with the attendant impossibility of gratifying this desire.

'It is our idea that one's present existence on earth is an expression of the past lives that one has led. We believe that there is an indefinite series of births and re-births ; that through this process enlightenment comes to us.'

—NEW YORK HERALD, SUNDAY, OCT. 14, 1917.

APPENDIX D

NOTES

1. *Foot note 8, p. 14* : The Lokâyata school believes consciousness or soul to be the product of physical elements. It says the soul is nothing but a by-product of the four physical elements, earth, water, fire and air.—“*Prithivya apaha tejo vayuhu iti chattari tattvani tebhya chaitanyam iti.*” According to the Lokâyatas the existence of the soul or consciousness ceases to function with the death of the physical body,—“*Paralokino'bhavat paralokabhava iti.*” Therefore, there is no such thing like the world after death. The soul means, according to them, the physical body which dies.

2. *Foot note 14, p. 22* : ‘When Ralph Waldo Emerson went to meet Carlyle in London, Carlyle presented to Emerson a copy of the English translation of the *Bhagavad Gîtâ* by Charles Wilkins and said, ‘I have been inspired by the teachings of *Bhagavad Gîta* and I hope that you will be similarly inspired by them.’ Emerson after reading the *Gîta* wrote that beautiful poem on *Brahm.*’—Swâmi Abhedânanda : *Leaves from My Diary*, p. 38.

3. *Foot note 18, p. 25* : The resurrection of the corpse was one of the earliest beliefs about the soul after death. Some say that the belief in, and the conception of, the soul or a ‘double’ apart from the body grew out of the sun’s daily rise and setting. As the sun sets and rises again in the sky in the next morning, so the soul of a man leaves the body to enter it again after the interval of a certain length of a specified time.

This early conception of the Vedic Aryas was transmitted through the trade route to Egypt, Babylon, Phoenecia, and other countries lying on either coast of the Mediterranean sea giving rise to the kindred allegorical stories of Tammuz, Attis, Adonis, Osirs, Demeter, Istar, Cybele, Apphrodite, Hermes, Mithras and other legends of the kind. The solar origin of these deities as well as of the Jesus the Christ has been recognized by J. M. Robertson, Arthur Drews, Conybeare and a whole host of European scholars. Sir Frazer on the other hand ascribes the phenomena of resurrection upon the annual suspension and the rejuvenation of the plant-life in the seasons of winter and spring respectively.

4. *Foot note 23, p. 35* : ‘Embalming is a method of preserving bodies by injections and dressings, either internally or externally applied.

‘This term is generally given to the process employed by the ancient Egyptians and others, by which corpses were preserved as mummies * *. The most elaborate process was somewhat as follows :

‘A deep cut was made beneath the ribs on the left side, and through the opening thus made the internal organs were removed, with the exception of the heart and kidneys. The brain was also extracted through the nose by means of a

bent iron instrument. The cavities of the skull and ~~trunk~~ were washed out with palm-wine, and filled with raisins, Cassia, and similar substances; and the skull was dressed by injecting drugs of various kinds through the nostrils. The body was then soaked in natron for seventy days. It was then removed and wrapped carefully in linen cloth, cemented by gums.

'The less expensive process consisted in removing only the brains and injecting the viscera with cedar oil. When the body was soaked in natron for the same period of time (seventy days), the viscera and soft parts came away *en masse*, and only the skin and bones were left* *. The very poor, who could not afford either of the above methods, embalmed their dead by washing the body in myrrh and salting it for seventy days.'—H. Carrington & Meader: *Death*, pp. 85-86.

5. *Foot note 24, p. 35*: We find in the Rig Veda, both the customs of burial (*anagnidhāna*) and cremation (*agnidhāna*) are mentioned in the same 10th Mandala. From the 14th to 18th Mandalas, there are 72 Mantras addressed to the Pitri-purushas, Yama, Agni and others. In the 1st Mantra of the 16th Sukta there is mentioned: "*Mainamagne bi daho mābhi shocho, masyatvachang chiksipo mā shariram; yadd shrītam krīnavo jātavedo themenam pra hinutāt pitrībhyā.*" That is, 'O Agni, do not burn the dead body completely, do not give him pain, do not scatter his skin or body. When his body will be burnt well with your flames, do send him to the *pitri-loka*.'

This invoking Mantra bears testimony to the fact not of complete but of partial cremation. In the 18th Sukta from 10th to 14th Mantras it is found again that there are the customs of complete burial: "*upa sarpa matam bhumime-tamuruvyachasam prithivīm suchevam*" etc. The fractional burial was also in vogue amongst the ancient Vedic peoples. In the 14th Mantra of the 15th Sukta of the Rig Veda we find again: "*Ye agnidagdha ye anagnidagha*" etc. This no doubt indicates both the customs, cremation and burial.

6. *Foot note 26, p. 4**: The early Buddhists held that there is no such thing as *soul in the sense* 'a permanent unchangeable entity.' Prof. Stcherbatsky: 'A personality (*pudgal*) in which other systems imagine the presence of a permanent spiritual principle, a soul (*Atman*), is in reality a bundle of elements or forces (*samskārasamuha*). It contains nothing permanent or substantial, it is *anatma*.' (*Conception of Nirvāna*, p. 8). Instead of *Attā* or *Atmā* only the *skandha-santāna* which has been compared to the flame of a lamp, is admitted by some of the schools of the Buddhists. They maintain a changing group of entities called the five *skandhas* which alone constitute a being regarded as *Attā* or soul. These *skandhas* may be of the grossest or the subtlest form, but they are in the continual flux of elements.

The philosophy of *Lankāvatāra* also explains this theory in the following manner: 'The Skandhas, Dhātus, and Ayatanas have nothing personal in them; there is no 'me and mine' in them* *. The material world as well as the physical

body are manifestations of the mind known as *Alayavijnāna*, and when they are discriminated as particular existences, we are discriminating our own mind-made. When thus created they are seen in constant transmigration, they never remain even for a moment as they are, they flow like a stream, they change like a seed, they flicker like a candle light, they move like the wind or like a cloud. Owing to the habit-energy (*vāsanā*) * * we now transmigrate from one state to another revolving like a wheel, like a machine, like a phantom creation, or like a walking ghost.'—D. T. Suzuki : *Studies in the Lankavatāra-Sutra*, p. 167.

7. *Foot note 38, p. 58* : In the Avesta of the Parsees we find the words : *Astabanta* (*Astibat*) and *Manahya* (*Manasya*) : i.e., the worlds, visible and invisible. There we also come across the word *Yima* (Sanskrit *Yama*), the son of *Bibingghat* (Sanskrit *Vaivasvat*). According to the Avesta, the soul remains swooned just after its death. For continuous three days and nights, the soul begins to think of its deeds, good or bad, done during its life time. The attachment for its nearest and dearest ones remains only for three days and nights, and after that it departs from there either for heaven or hell. We find in the Zend-Avesta (*Yast XXII*) : Zarathustra asked Ahura-Mazda : 'O Ahura-Mazda, when one of the faithful departs this life, where does his soul abide on that night ?' Ahura-Mazda answered : 'It takes its seat near the head singing the *ushtavaiti Gāthā* ;' etc. Vide Swāmi Abhedānanda : *Great Saviours of the World*, pp. 119-142.
8. *Foot note 40, p. 6** : Dr. Inge says that transmigration or rebirth is incorrectly called 'metempsychosis.' He says that *Metensomatosis* or *Palingenesia* are the right words, since it is the bodies, not the souls, that are changed to rebirth.—
9. *Foot note 41, p. 6** : Except Pythagoras and Plato other celebrated Greek philosophers and historians maintained the same belief regarding it. As we find 'according to Herodotus (II. 123)', J. F. Clarke quotes, 'the soul must pass through all animals, fishes, insects, and birds ; in short, must complete the whole circuit of animated existence, before it again enters the body of a man ; and this circuit of the souls is performed in three thousand years.' *The Great Religions*, p. 226.

Empedocles believed that the cause of transmigration was sin and the full terms of transmigration covered 30,000 years. But he said that finally the soul would become a god. This view more or less coincides with the Paurānic theory of the Hindus. The Paurānic theory says that soul transmigrates from the lower to the higher births 84,00,000 times and ultimately returns to human form again. Pinder believed that only the bad were condemned to transmigration and the good went to the sky, the air, Elysium or Olympus. But 'Porphyry and Iamblichus,' as Dr. Inge reminds us, 'refuse to believe that human souls are ever sent to inhabit the bodies of beasts and birds.' 'The earliest Hermetic document, the *Kore Kosmou*, is dated probably to 510. B. C., and certainly within a century after that, by an allusion to the Persian

rule. * * metempsychosis is assumed between human and animal bodies, the soul is individual, and at death it returns to its proper position in the sixty regions between the earth and moon. Thence it seems to have been conducted to earth again for a reincarnation.'—Cf. W. M. Felinders Petric : *Aspects of Egyptian Religion*, (in Oxford : *History of Religions*, Vol. I p. 196).

Most of the poets, philosophers and celebrated historians of ancient Greece believed in the existence and immortality of the human soul beyond grave. Erwin Rohde in his celebrated book *Psyche* has shown clearly how the cult of souls and the beliefs in the immortality of the soul were prevalent among the Dionysic Religion, the Orphics, the philosophers, and the poets in Greece of the glorious past days. Dr. Inge states : '* * belief in immortality was less general in the first century than it is among ourselves, and decidedly less general than it became two hundred years later. * * the Romans were disposed to believe in some sort of shadowy survival, which justified family meetings at the grave and the customary tributes to the departed spirit. * * But the belief in ghosts and apparitions * seems to have been almost universal in the second century, except among the 'godless Epicureans.' Plutarch, Dion Cassius, the younger Pliny, and Suetonius all believed in spiritualism ; and Neoplatonism, with its doctrine of 'daemons' did nothing to discourage it. The decay of Aristotelianism removed obstacles to free belief in immortality, * *. The main doctrines of Orphism were the probation of the Soul in this life as a preparation for eternity, * and the rebirth of souls in higher or lower forms, determined by the merits and demerits if the subject in its previous state of existence.'—(*Plotinus*, Vol. I, pp. 52-53).

10. *Foot note 43, p. 72* Cf. Swâmi Abhedânanda : *Reincarnation*, p. 97, and Dr. Pringle-Pattison : *The Idea of Immortality*, p. 108.

In the *Upanishads* we find the following passages which mention the retrogression of human souls to lower and animal bodies :

(i) "*Atha ya etau panthânau na viduste kitaha patanga yadiḍam dandashukam.*"—(*Bṛihadâraṇyaka Upanishad*, 6.2.16). That is, 'those who do not know these two paths (*dakṣhîḍyana* and *uttarâḍyana*), they become insects and moths, and these frequently biting things (gnats and mosquitoes).'

(ii) "*That ye iha ramaniyacharana abhyâsho'yatte ramniyam yonimâpaderan Brâhmanayonim vâ Ksatriyayonim vâ Vais-yayonimvâ. Atha ye iha kapuyacharana abhyâsho'yatte kapuyam yonimâpadyeran shvayonim va shukarayonim vâ chandâlayonim vâ.*"—(*Chândogya Upanishad*, 5.10.7). That is, 'those who have been of good conduct here would quickly attain good birth—birth of Brahmana, birth of Kshatriya, or birth of Vaisya. And those who have been of bad conduct here attain evil birth,—the birth of a dog, the birth of a hog, or the birth of a Chandâla.'

(iii) “*Yonimanye prapadyante shariratvaya dehinaha ; sthā-numanye’ nusamyanti yathākarma yathāshrutam.*”—(Katha Upanishad, 2.2.7). That is, ‘some souls according to their Karma and inclination of mind receive another birth, and some others again are degenerated into the states of trees and stones.’

(iv) In the *Sāṅkhāyana Aranyaka* (Ch. II, 2) and *Kaushitaki-Brāhmaṇa Upanishad*, (1.1-6), we find it is mentioned : “* *chandramasastam yat pretyaha* * * *sa iha kito vā patan-go vā shakunir vā shardulo vā simho vā mastyo vā parashva vā* * * *pratyajāyate.*” That is, ‘those who depart from this world shall go to the moon. * * He is born on earth as a worm, or a grasshopper, or a fish, or a bird, or a lion, or a boar, or a snake, or a tiger, or a man, or another creature, in one or other station according to his deeds and his knowledge.’

11. *Foot note 61, p. 168* : Grant Allen mentions : ‘It is the universal Catholic custom to place the relics of saints or martyrs under the altars in churches. Thus the body of St. Mark the evangelist lies under the high altar of St. Mark’s, at Venice ; and in every other Italian Cathedral, or chapel, a reliquary is deposited within the altar itself. So well understood is this principle in the Latin Church that it has hardened into the saying, ‘No relic, no altar.’ The sacrifice of the Mass takes place at such an altar, and is performed by a priest in sacrificial robes. The entire Roman Catholic ritual is a ritual derived from the earlier sacerdotal ideas of ministry at an altar, and its connection with the primitive form is still kept up by the necessary presence of human remains in its holy places.

Furthermore, the very idea of a church itself is descended from the early Christian meeting-places in the catacombs or at the tombs of the martyrs, which are universally allowed to have been the primitive Christian altars. * * Thus Christianity is linked on to the very antique custom of worship at tombs, and habit of ancestor-worship by altars, relics, and invocation of saints, even revolutionary Protestantism still retaining some last faint marks of its origin in the dedication of churches to particular evangelists or martyrs, and in the more or less disguised survival of altar, priesthood, sacrifice, and vestments.—*The Evolution of the Idea of God*, pp. 24-26.

12. *Foot note 71, p. 18** : In the *Shrāddha* ceremony of the Hindus an effigy (*Brahmana*) made of Kusha-grass (*darbhama*—*Brāhmaṇa*) is placed and worshipped as an image or a representative of the dead. In the *Vrisotsarga-shrāddha* ceremony, there is used again a *Yupa* made of the Vilva tree which is called the *Vrisakastha* in the shape of a man or woman. This idol or the wooden post is preserved after the *Shrāddha* ceremony is over as the symbol or image of the deceased.

We find again that there is current a custom of burning the effigy which is called the *Parnanaradaha* or *Kushaputtalikā* as a different kind of cremation ceremony of the Hindus.

This ceremony is observed when the dead body of the deceased is not found. This effigy is made of 360 leaves of *Palāsha* or *Shara* according to the *Suddhitattva*.

The similar custom is also found in many other nations of the world. Cf. Frazer : *Golden Bough*, pt. IV, Vol. I, pp. 250-259 ; Grant Allen : *Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 94 ; R. M. Dorman : *The Origin of Primitive Superstitions*, p. 117 ; Dr. E. O. James : *Comparative Religion*, pp. 311-312 ; Elliot Smith : *Egyptian Mummies*, F. E. A., 1914, p. 192 ; A. W. Benn : *The Greek Philosopher*, p. 503 ; W. Budge : *Book of the Dead*, Ch. VI ; L. A. Waddell : *Buddhism in Tibet or Lamaism*, p. 405.

13. Foot note 92, p. 237 : This statement of Swami Abhedānanda reminds us two of the instances which we were privileged to hear from him. He said that when he was in America, he saw in one evening a face of a discarnate spirit floating in the air before him. The face of the spirit looked pale marked with pain and agony. The Swāmi asked the spirit : 'What ails you ?' The voice came : 'Help me. Help me. I am suffering. I have committed suicide.' The Swāmi blessed him by saying : 'If you think my prayers and blessings will help you, you have my good wishes, I am praying for you. Peace be unto you.' The Swāmi saw that the pale and gloomy face of the spirit then lighted up and melted away smiling. The other instance was of a spirit of a sailor who was drowned in the sea. He too appeared before him like one groping in darkness. The Swami asked him : 'What's wrong with you ?' The spirit replied that he did not know, he was drowned. He requested the Swami to help him. The Swami then prayed for him, and he melted away with his look bright and peaceful.

It will nit be out of place to mention here again that Swāmi Abhedānanda heard also the voice of his brother disciple Swāmi Adbhutānanda (Lātu Mahārāj) immediately after his passing away in India. The Swāmi heard one day a heavy voice in the air : 'Kali Kali' He immediately looked around, but found no body. He asked who he was, and the voice came : 'I am Lātu, I have come to see you.' The Swāmi apprehended the passing away of his beloved borthor and it came to be true when he received the cablegram next next day bearing the sad news of Swāmi Adbhutānanda's demise.

The Swāmi also saw the materialized spirit of the Poet Girish Chandra Ghose, who was spitting on all sides as he appeared. The explanation of that act of Girish Chandra was given by the Swami as : As we spit at a useless ephemeral thing so the Poet being free from the bondage of his earthly body spat on the ephemeral worldly things, which bears no actual value or reality in comparison with the Absolute existence.

APPENDIX E

*EXTRACTS FROM THE SACRED WRITINGS OF THE
ANCIENT HINDUS AND THOSE OF THE MYSTICS, POETS
AND PHILOSOPHERS, AS REGARDS THE PRE-EXIS-
TENCE AND IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL :*

“O Agni, make warm that part of this deceased which is birthless and eternal with thy heat. Let thy brightness and thy flame make that part of his heated. O Jâtaveda Agni take this departed soul to the spheres of the pious and virtuous with thy forms of welfare.”

—RIGVEDA, X. 16.4.

“This man has only two abodes, this and the next world.” (4.3.9).
“Exhausting the results of whatever work he did in this life, he returns from that world to this for (fresh) work.’ Thus does the man who desires transmigrates.” (4.4.6).

“The Self is taintless, beyond the (subtle) ether, birthless, infinite and constant.” (4.4.20).

—BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD.

“Mortal is the, body, held by death ;—it is the abode of that Immortal (unbodied) Self. The bodied one is held by pleasure and pain ; * * but pleasure and pain do not touch the unbodied Self.”

—CHANDOGYA UPANISHAD.

‘The soul must be a thing both uncreated and immortal * * And then it is that a human soul passes into the life of a beast, and from a beast who was once a man the soul comes back into a man again.’

—PLATO.

‘It (soul) is an absolute reality. * * it exists before ever it belongs to a body.’

—PLOTINUS.

‘The human mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the body, but something of it remains which is eternal.’

—SPINOZA.

‘The soul is always joined with the aggregate of subordinate Monads, though not always with the same ones. * * not the soul only, but every living thing is imperishable. * * Death is decrease and unvolition, birth increase and evolution. The dying creature lises only a portion of its bodily machine and returns to the slumberous or germinal condition of *evolution*, in which it existed before birth, * *. Pre-existence as well as post-existence must be conceded both to animals and men.’

—LEIBNITZ.

‘The soul is indivisible, incorporeal, unextended, and it is consequently incorruptible. * * Such a being therefore is indissoluble by the force of nature ; that is to say, *the soul of man is naturally immortal.*’

—BERKELEY.

'Now, this endless progress (*progress in infinitum*) is only possible on the supposition of an *endless* duration of the *e* xistence and personality of the same rational being (which is called the immortality of the soul). The *summum bonum*, then, practically is only possible on the supposition of the immortality of the soul.'

—IMMANUEL KANT.

'Man as Spirit is immortal, is an object of God's interest, is raised above finitude and dependence, * * that he has freedom to abstract himself from everything, and this implies that he can escape mortality.'

—HEGEL.

'The immortal *Psyche* remains, with fettered pinions, fastened to the earth.'

'Death in Nature is Birth, and in Death itself appears visibly the exaltation of Life. There is no destructive principle in Nature, for Nature throughout is pure, unclouded Life; * * Death and Birth are but the struggle of Life with itself to assume a more glorious and congenial form. * * and what mortals call Death is the visible appearance of this second Life. * * Death is the ladder by which my spiritual vision rises to a new Life and a new Nature.'

—FICHTE.

'The finite self is plainly a partial world, yet possesses within it the principle of infinity, taken in the sense of the *nisus* towards absolute unity and self-completion.'

—B. BOSANQUET.

'I communicate my view, not of course in order to convert any one to my opinion, but because I am convinced that a serious study of these phenomena is of the greatest importance to psychology, and because I think that my personal confession may lead a reader or two to approach the region of investigation which is usually treated with contempt by so-called men of science.'

—PROF. WILLIAM JAMES.

'We never become, for our own rational consciousness, perfect individual selves. Yet all our empirical life has meaning, and constitutes the life of one Self, just in so far, but only in so far, as this our empirical life is consciously viewed by ourselves as a process of progressing towards the fulfilment of our individual and consciously chosen ideal.'

—PROF. JOSIAH ROYCE.

'Any evidence which will prove immortality will also prove pre-existence. * * each of us exists through all time—past and future.'

'Human selves are among the fundamental differentiations of the universe, and that they are therefore, *sub specie temporis*, immortal.'

—DR. MACTAGGART.

'It is the spirit, it is Reality in so far as it is truly real, in so far as it is unity of thought and willing; it is Life in so far as realized in its profundity as this unity itself; it is Freedom, if a reality so conceived be perpetual development, creation, progress.'

—B. CROCE.

'I do not hesitate to accept the spiritualistic theory, * * I only insist upon the application of scientific methods to the study and settlement of the great problems of immortality.'

—PROF. JAMES H. HYSLOP.

'Let us not forget that we here have to deal with a science of today and yesterday, which is still groping for its utensils, ways, methods, and aims, and that in the midst of a night which is darker than the earthly night, * * Most sciences have centuries of useless effort and barren uncertainty behind them, and among the youngest of them there are probably few which promise such a harvest, even in the first stages—a harvest which may not correspond to what we believe ourselves to have sown, but which already shows many buds of a strange and unknown fruit.'

—MAETERLINCK.

'* * it seems to me that the spiritualistic hypothesis may be mentioned with the same right as the other, for all discussions on it have not proved that it is untenable.'

—C. FLAMMARION.

'A life after death is not a matter of speculation or conjecture, of hope and fear; it is a practical certainty which the individual as little dreams of doubting as he doubts the reality of his conscious existence.'

—J. G. FRAZER.

'The burial customs of many peoples afford the best evidence that the disembodied soul is conceived as like in all essential respects to the living of soul and body. * * And the even more widely spread custom of burying or burning with the dead man his most valued possessions, especially weapons and ornaments, is due to the belief that even these things have their shadowy duplicates or ghost-souls, which can be carried away by the departing soul and used by it as the real objects were used by the living man.'

—PROF. McDougall.

'The faith in immortality may be less widespread than the belief in a God, though this is doubtful.'

—PROF. PRATT.

'It (spirit) is a thin, unsubstantial human image, in its nature a sort of vapour, film, or shadow: * * continuing to exist and appear to men after the death of that body: able to enter into, possess, and act in the bodies of other men, of animals, and even of things.'

—PROF. TYLOR.

'The soul is not in time; time is rather in the soul. Values are eternal and indestructible. * * we are sure of our immortality.'

—DEAN INGE.

'What is true of our apprehension of the divine is true also of its counterpart in the creature—soul and spirit.'

—RUDOLF OTTO.

'Then man who has let things pass away in their lower forms where they are mortal ; receives them again in God, where alone they are real. All that is dead here, is life there. And all that is here gross and tangible is there (*sub specie ydeali*) spirit.'

—MEISTER ECKHART.

'Death has no power the immortal soul to slay,
That, when its present body turns to clay,
Seeks a fresh home, and with unlesened might,
Inspires another frame with life and light.
* * * * *

Death, so called, is not older matter dressed
In some new form. And in a varied vest,
From tenement to tenement though tossed.
The soul is still the same, the figure only lost.'

—DRYDEN.

'The soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting
And cometh from afar.'

—W. WORDSWORTH.

'Support the fervour of the heavenly morn ?
No. No. The energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun ;
And he who flagged not in the earthly strife,
From strength to strength advancing—only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and the hardly, to eternal life.'

—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

- (a). Alas ; What is life, what is death,
What are we,
That when the ship sinks we no
longer may be
What to see thee no more, and to feel
thee no more,
To be after life what we have been before '
- (b). 'The One remains, the many change and pass ;
c Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly ;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek '

—P. B. SHELLEY.

'For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
* * * * *
Shall changes, shall becomes first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O Thou Soul of my soul I shall clasp Thee again,
And with God be the rest '

—R. BROWNING.

'Form is born of that which is without form,
And goes again, for *verily to Him do we return*.'

—AL-GHAZALI : *Masnavi*.

'Of my soul's union with this fleshly frame,
Of life and death Thou art the end and aim.'

* * * * *

'The forms which clothe existence only stay
One moment, in the next they pass away ;
This subtle point is proven by the text ;*
Its fashion altereth from day to day.'

—JIMI : *Lawa'ih*.

* *Koran*, lv. 29.

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